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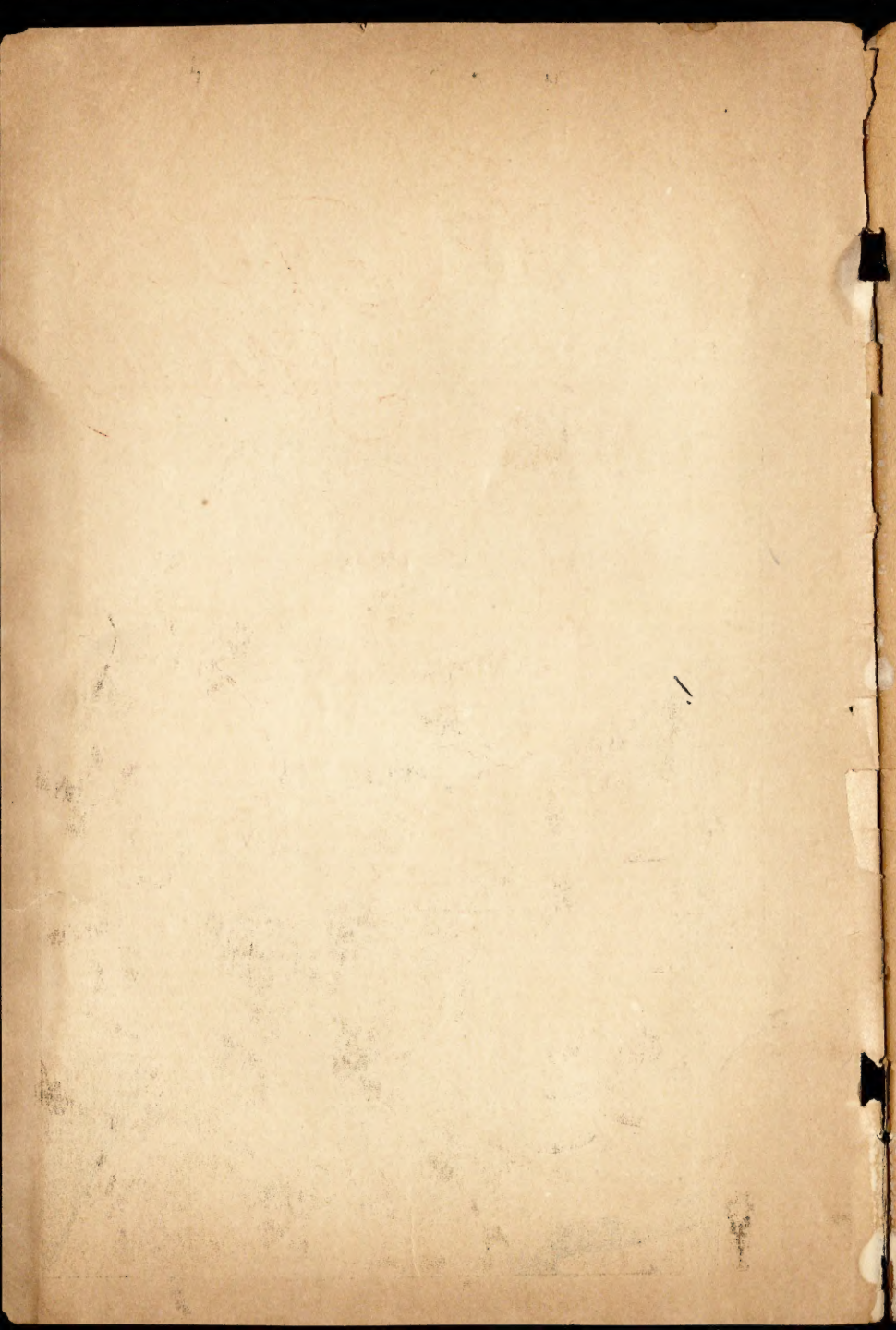
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Nick Carter Stories

WHEN ACES WERE TRUMPS
OR A HARD GAME TO PLAY



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NICK CARTER STORIES

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No. 58.

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WHEN ACES WERE TRUMPS; Or, A HARD GAME TO PLAY.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

NICK CARTER'S CAREFUL PLANS.

There is a saloon far down on the west side of the city of New York which has long been a favorite resort for crooks of all classes, and, although it has been the scene of many crimes, as well as of duels to the death between members of the "profession" who had grouches against each other, it is still as popular as ever among denizens of the underworld.

For obvious reasons it shall be nameless, save that we will speak of it as "Kelly's"; and it is inside Kelly's place where the scene of the first act of this story is laid.

Now, Kelly's saloon was in many ways different from the ordinary place of the kind. A stranger who entered merely for refreshment would have noticed nothing more than an ordinary barroom with the usual number of idlers hanging listlessly around; and he might, if he remained at the bar long enough, have noticed that at intervals, there were men who passed through a low and narrow door that was situated behind the bar, and at the farther end of it.

These persons seemed always to pass in and out with the assurance of people who belonged there and had become accustomed to the route by long familiarity with it.

Many would have supposed that the door concealed a gambling room of some kind, situated in the rear of the place, but in that they would have been entirely in the wrong, for gambling was the one thing which was absolutely tabooed at Kelly's.

"I won't stand for it, boys," Kelly had told them many times. "You can't even match for drinks in my place," and as Kelly was a character who usually meant what he said, that settled it.

This room, which was entered through the little door behind the bar, was very large, provided with tables and

chairs, and a small stage which supported a piano was at one end of it.

There was a bar at the side of the room, and there were always two bartenders and a number of waiters in attendance upon the customers.

In reality, therefore, the front bar, which was entered from the street, was for the accommodation of transients and hurry customers; the back bar was for the regular patrons.

It is true, of course, that the back bar was equally as accessible to strangers as to the regular customers. There was two entrances to it: the one through the front barroom, and another from an alley between the buildings; but it was equally true that strangers were not looked upon with favor by the frequenters of the place, and they were usually made to feel a sense of their isolation in no uncertain way.

Kelly's back bar was a general open meeting place for the aristocracy of crookdom. A "gun" had to have attracted attention to himself to be made welcome there; he must have accomplished something that was calculated to win the respect and admiration of the underworld, before the glad hand was extended to him, and he was made to feel that he was indeed one with them.

Kelly's back room had won an enviable reputation in one respect. It was said that there had never been an arrest within those walls, and whether the statement was true or not, it was very generally believed, so generally, in fact, that even the most hotly pursued criminal did not hesitate to cross the portals of the place and to remain there long enough to say "Hello" to his friends, to take a drink or two, and then to move on.

You might go in there almost any night in the week, and if you were informed, recognize many of the most celebrated crooks of the day among the guests; but

Monday nights were the times when you would have found the greatest and best—or, rather, worst—of them there.

Kelly himself called Monday nights "mob nights," for that was the time selected by his patrons for meeting and planning new expeditions against the peace and safety of warehouses, banks, stores, pockets, et cetera.

On such occasions there were bank burglars and house breakers, pickpockets and second-story "slickers," confidence men and green-goods workers, forgers—and, in fact, every class of crook who had by some master stroke of genius in his own line managed to rise to a position of prominence and eminence in the underworld.

The back room was never open for the accommodation of customers during the day, and it was rarely that the bartenders and waiters who attended to it took their place before ten in the evening; but from ten at night until the sun rose upon another day, Kelly's back room did a star-route business.

The clock against the wall over the bar indicated the hour of midnight when Nick Carter entered the place, and with a quick survey of the interior selected the only unoccupied table in the room, crossed quickly to it, and dropped into a chair.

He had walked across the room none too steadily, either, and the owners of the few pairs of eyes that were sufficiently interested in a newcomer to take notice, no doubt got the idea that he had approached dangerously near to the dividing line between sobriety and intoxication.

I have said plainly here that Nick Carter entered the place, but it must not be supposed that any of the persons who raised their eyes when he entered had any idea that it was Nick Carter who was crossing the floor before them; if such a thought had presented itself to their intelligences there would at once have been a marked exodus from the apartment.

In wandering into the back room of Kelly's in the manner he did, Nick, of course, had in view a definite plan, and one which he had decided upon after the capture of a notorious crook named Swipes, as has already been told about in a recent number of NICK CARTER STORIES.

Information of a reliable character had reached the detective that there was a regular confederation of crooks under process of organization, which was intended to extend its power from one ocean to the other, and from Canada to the Gulf.

That this report was founded on fact the detective had no doubt.

Already there had been discovered evidences of its existence in different cities, and already, in more ways than one, its power had been manifested.

After the capture of Swipes and his gang of sixty-eight men in the cave on the Hudson River, near Nyack, Nick had consulted with the inspector in charge of the detective bureau at police headquarters in New York, and afterward by telegraph with the chiefs of police of the larger cities of the United States, with the result that he had been unanimously delegated to get at the root of the organization scheme of the crooks, with the understanding that after that was accomplished, measures would be taken to break it up.

He had just entered upon the difficult and almost impossible task of initiating himself into the good graces of the residents of the underworld, when he entered the back room at Kelly's.

He knew, of course, that every crook in New York was on the lookout for him. He knew that since the arrest of Swipes and the wholesale clearing out of his gang, the different "mobs" had a hunch that the Little Giant was on their trail for keeps, and they knew that the only way in the world by which they could hope to avoid serious consequences, was to lie low until the suggestion of the present organization had blown over, or until Nick Carter had been called away upon other business which would take up his time.

Nobody realized these facts better than Nick Carter himself.

But he was a man of infinite and wonderful resource, else he could never have become the marvelously successful detective he was.

Preparations for this great undertaking had, therefore, been entered into with great care and delicate arrangement, for there were two points which Nick considered of paramount importance to his undertaking.

The first and most important of them was that Nick Carter should be supposed to have left the city on important business that would keep him absent for some time, and his mission should be such that the world of crooks could be made to believe that they were keeping track of him and knowing where he was located all the time that he was away.

This was accomplished easily enough, for Chick was disguised as his chief, and in the guise of Nick Carter sailed for London. A short conversation between the inspector in charge of the detective bureau at police headquarters in New York and Nick had arranged that.

"All you've got to do in the matter, chief," the detective said to the inspector, "is to let one of your stool pigeons give out the information that I am going to London on the Folsom case, and then to arrange it so that they will know that I do go."

"Yes; but you won't go."

"No; Chick will go in my place. He can make up so like me that you would not know the difference yourself. That is the way in which I was supposed to return home from Japan, when I was doing some important work for the mikado several years ago, while in reality I remained right there all the time."

And, accordingly, that very afternoon, before Nick Carter appeared in the back room at Kelly's, more than one pair of eyes that belonged to watchers for crookdom had seen the supposed Nick Carter sail away on a Cunard steamship; and they had so reported to their friends.

Now, that was only a few hours ago, but already it was known in Chicago and St. Louis—even in New Orleans and San Francisco, that Nick Carter had gone abroad.

The second point which Nick considered of importance as militating for his success, was the liberation of Swipes, and this was a far more difficult task, for it had to be accomplished in such a manner that the incarcerated criminal should have no suspicion that he was deliberately given his liberty.

Nick knew that Swipes, if at liberty, and with the belief that he was not watched, would inevitably lead him, almost at once, to the very men from whom the information he desired was to be derived, and he also knew that if Swipes gained his liberty, and at the same time entertained any suspicion that the thing was connived at by the police, or arranged by them, he would never make

a move that could betray his pals, for he would know only too well why he had been freed.

To liberate a man like Swipes from jail, and at the same time to keep him from even suspecting that he is purposely allowed to escape, was a delicate matter, and when Nick suggested it to the inspector, the latter shook his head in great doubt.

"I've tried that game so often, Nick," he said. "It doesn't work once out of a hundred times. Your man will escape, all right, if you give him the opportunity, but he will do you more harm than good, after he has escaped. That is as sure as you are foot high."

"How so?"

"Because he'll be onto you, and instead of leading you to the men you want to find, he'll manage to find a way to warn them, so that you will never find them at all."

"All the same," replied Nick, "I feel very confident that I can arrange things so that Swipes will go scot-free and that he will never suspect but that it was an accident that set him at liberty."

"Well, what is your plan?" questioned the inspector, with a doubtful tone in his voice.

"This: I think there is an old black Maria at the Tombs—or it may be over at Ludlow Street Jail now, which is generally out of use, unless you are crowded or have a rush for the courtrooms after a raid."

"Well?"

"Give me the old black Maria. I'll loosen up some of the bolts at the rear end of it so that it won't require much of a blow to knock them entirely out."

"Yes; and when Swipes finds that the bolts are loose he will smell a rat quicker than lightning."

"He won't find out they are loose."

"Then what's the good—"

"I want Swipes taken into that old black Maria, and driven through a certain street in a certain direction at an hour that I shall name; I think it would be well if you arrange so that my assistant, Patsy Garvan, could do that driving for me. Some of the firemen of the city are rather good friends of mine, and I'll arrange that one of the big hook and ladder trucks shall be going through that street where the black Maria will be driven by Patsy Garvan at a pretty lively gait. That hook and ladder truck will hit the black Maria and knock it galley west, and if the loosened bolts don't give way, I miss my guess. There's only one thing to interfere with the success of the plan."

"What's that?"

"Well, you see, we've got to hit that black Maria mighty hard in order to break it open. We can't figure down to pounds and ounces just how hard it will be hit, and it may be that Swipes will be so badly hurt that he can't escape. If he isn't, you can take my word for it that he will disappear, and that he will never have an idea that it was anything but a genuine accident, sent by a special crooks' providence, to liberate him at the very moment when he is expecting to get at least ten years in limbo."

CHAPTER II.

IN KELLY'S BACK ROOM.

And that is how it happened that at the moment when Nick Carter was supposed, by the underworld that feared him, to be sailing away on the broad Atlantic toward the shores of England, he was in reality crossing the floor of the back room at Kelly's toward an unoccupied table—

and that is also how it happened that while he was crossing the floor, he could see at one of the tables at the opposite side of the room, no less a personage than the redoubtable Swipes himself.

Swipes had one arm in a sling and several strips of plaster on his face, and he was talking in a low tone to three companions who appeared to be listening eagerly to all that he had to say; and Nick smiled to himself, thinking:

"He's telling the story of his wonderful escape, and how it almost killed him. He does look as if it shook him up pretty well."

Swipes was one of the first to raise his eyes when Nick entered the room, for Swipes had reasons for being wary of each new arrival.

Forty-eight hours had not yet elapsed since the black Maria in which he had been an involuntary passenger had been smashed by a fire truck, and he had made his escape. Naturally he supposed that every officer in the city was on the lookout for him.

It is true that he felt quite safe in the back room at Kelly's, but—

"Who's that guy?" he asked of his companions, indicating Nick with a nod.

The three stole a glance in Nick's direction, when he had taken a seat and given an order to one of the waiters, but none of them recognized him as anybody they had seen or heard of before.

"Move around and find out," ordered Swipes. "One of you ask Kelly to come in and identify him if he can. He knows the push from Sandy Hook to the Golden Gate. I don't."

In a moment Swipes was alone at the table, and half turning his back toward Nick, he still maintained a position so that he could see out of the corner of his eye, if the stranger made a move to rise.

A moment later Kelly entered the room and took a seat beside Swipes.

"Boys said you wanted me," he said. "What is it, Swipes, old top?"

"Who is the new guy?" asked Swipes.

"Where?"

"Over at one of Fadden's tables; the one nearest the wall. Take a peep at him."

Kelly turned deliberately and studied Nick long and carefully. Presently he turned again to Swipes.

"New bug, I reckon," he said.

"Copper, s'pose?"

"Maybe. Can't say."

"Ever see him before?"

"No; but I'll tell you who he looks like."

"Who?"

"Carter."

"Who?"

"Nick Carter."

"He don't look any more like Nick Carter than I do, Kelly. You're away off, old man!"

"Nit, Swipes. You never saw Carter."

"Never saw him? Wasn't it Carter who nabbed me up at the cave near Nyack? Didn't I have a mighty good chance to get onto his phiz? Well, I should worry. Say, guess again, Kelly."

"I tell you that you never saw Nick Carter," persisted Kelly.

"Aw, say! You make me tired!"

"You never saw him as he really is, I mean. Now I did, once on a time."

"You mean without disguise?"

"Yes."

"Well, it may be that you are right. I've heard that before, and I never believed it. He didn't seem to wear any disguise when I saw him up the Hudson."

"All the same it's a million to one that he did. But I saw him once when his face was perfectly natural—when I know it was natural."

"And you say that this feller looks like him, eh?"

"Dead ringer, Swipes."

"Maybe it is him."

Kelly laughed.

"You don't suppose that Nick Carter could come here to my place, on business, looking like himself, do you?" he asked.

"Well, I shouldn't think he would; but you can never tell what Nick Carter is going to do next."

"That's so. All the same—"

"Well, all the same what?"

"I don't think he'd do that."

"Well, there's one thing certain. If it is Nick Carter, he is here after me. If he is here after me, there is no use in keeping him waiting, is there?"

"What do you mean, Swipes?"

"Why, if it's Carter, and he is here after me, he might as well begin the action of this little melodrama right now, eh?"

Kelly leaned across the table and placed one hand on the shoulder of his companion.

"Swipes," he said coldly, "you know me. I will stand for you as far as I can; you know that, but I won't have any shooting or cutting in my place. If you try that on, I'll send you to the 'escape' myself, so don't try it."

"Well, go and bring the guy over here to this table, then. Let's talk to him."

"I'll do that. If it is Carter, he can't arrest you in here, not if I can help it, but if he wants to surround the building and take you when you leave, I can't prevent that."

"Bring him over here, anyhow. Let's find out who the blazes he is."

"All right, Swipes; but remember what I said."

"Oh, I'll remember; don't worry."

All the same, when Kelly left the table to go after Nick Carter and conduct him to the spot where Swipes was sitting, the latter deftly removed a long knife from its sheath at his side and placed it on the shelf underneath the table that was made for the accommodation of beer glasses.

It must be remembered that he carried one of his arms in a sling, and that with only one hand to use, the weapon would be much easier to reach if it were under the table, than if it were down in its sheath at his side.

But both he and Kelly, as well as the other residents of the underworld, had much to learn concerning Nick Carter before they would be able to cope with him.

In starting out to run to earth an entire organization of men, every one of whom was a master at craft and resource, Nick Carter knew that he was undertaking one of the most delicate and difficult tasks of his life, and because he believed in the theory that oftentimes the boldest moves are the safest and best, he had on this occasion

adopted one that would have been pronounced foolhardy by even the most sincere among his admirers.

When he entered the back room at Kelly's, therefore, he was entirely—no, almost entirely—without disguise. He had permitted his mustache a week of growth, he had clipped his own hair down close to his head; he had discolored his teeth to a tobacco-stained yellow; he had spent two or three days in tossing stones and brick around his back yard until his hands and nails were naturally begrimed, chapped, and otherwise unlike his own; he had adopted a slouching walk and an expression of feature which were totally unlike his own; and he had made up his mind that for a little while he was actually going to forget that he was Nick Carter, the great detective.

It was not forgotten by him that there was always a possibility that he would encounter somebody in the underworld who had seen Nick Carter in his proper person and who therefore might think that he recognized the detective in this supposed crook; and he was thoroughly prepared for that emergency, as will appear.

He knew when he started out that it would be impossible for him to go through the long experience which might cover months, in a disguise.

Somebody would discover that he wore a disguise, even if his identity were not found out; but to be caught in a disguise of any sort and for any reason, would prove fatal to his enterprise, and so, as he expressed it, he decided to take the bull by the horns and for once to face the music as he was.

And that was why Kelly thought that the newcomer might possibly be Nick Carter.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN ACES ARE TRUMPS.

"I reckon you're a stranger around these parts," said Kelly when he approached the detective.

"You ought to play the races," retorted Nick.

"Why?" asked Kelly.

"You're such a good guesser. You'd win."

"Good. You are almost as funny as you are strange, ain't you?" laughed Kelly.

"Maybe so. Does it affect you any?"

"No; only we like to know our associates around these parts. What might I call your mouchon?" asked Kelly, using the thieves' slang word for name.

"Well, you might call it almost anything you had a mind to, I suppose. I've been using a number so long that my name has got sort of stale."

"Been in the lit?"

"Lit? Is that what you call it here?" asked Nick, with a slow drawl to which he purposely gave a very slight touch of English accent.

"Yes. That's what we call it here. Is that where you've been?"

Nick nodded; then, slowly, he added:

"In Australia."

"Oh; I see. Just come to this show over here?"

"I was born here—that is, in Chi; but I went away fifteen years ago. I've been working at a trade for the last ten. Thought I'd move out when my time was up."

"Just strike York?"

"'Bout a week ago."

"Well, if you'll give me that mouchon, I'd like to

take you across the room and introduce you to a friend of mine who thinks he would like to talk to you."

"I'm agreeable. Suppose you give me yours first."

"I'm Kelly—the boss here."

"The devil you are! Well, excuse me. Glad to know you, Kelly. Fact is, I came around here to-night on purpose to have a talk with you."

"Jack Gardner told me to look you up. He's a lifer over there, you know. Said you'd remember him all right, and that you'd stand for me if I proved myself. My name's Carter."

Kelly started back, scowled, and then laughed; and he kept laughing so long that Nick finally began to look offended.

"Something tickling you, Kelly?" he asked.

"Yes. Mightily. Gee whiz! Say, excuse me, but would you mind telling me your mouchon again? After that, I'll tell you why I laughed."

"Carter. Is there anything funny about that?"

"Mighty funny. What is your first name?"

"Ace."

"Ace? Well, that's funny. I never heard that name before."

"Well," said Nick, "I'm sorry to hear that, because I supposed that everybody over here knew about us."

"Knew about us? Who do you mean by us?"

"My brother and me. There are two aces of us. He is Diamond Carter, because he makes the sparklers his specialty. I'm Club Carter, because I'm so quick with my flippers; but at home we're called the two aces almost always. When he gets here—"

"Your brother? Is he coming here, too?"

"Yes. We agreed to meet here in your place. His time was almost out when I came away. He ought to be here in about a fortnight."

"So your name is Ace Carter, eh?"

"That's it."

"Well, it's a good one. I'll talk to you about Jack Gardner after a little. I thought he was dead, and I'm glad he ain't if there is any chance for him to get away. We'll talk about him later. Just now I want to introduce you to that friend of mine I mentioned."

"Who is he?"

"That's him over there, with his arm in a sling. Come ahead. You watch him close when I introduce you. There might be something doing."

They crossed the room together and paused at the table beside Swipes, and they were so placed that the table was between Nick and Swipes, which, in view of what took place, was fortunate.

"Swipes," said Kelly, "let me introduce you to Mr. Carter."

It was said very quietly, and there was a gleam of humor in Kelly's eyes as he uttered the name, for after what had passed between him and Swipes on the subject of the stranger, he was prepared to see Swipes greatly startled by the announcement of the name; but he was not prepared for what actually happened.

The instant the name was uttered Swipes threw himself back in the chair, slid rather lower down in the seat and reached underneath it toward the knife he had concealed there.

Then, like a flash, he straightened back again, his hand flew into the air, and with a motion that was as quick

as a cat, he threw the knife with all his strength straight at Nick Carter's heart.

It was a very quick move, and also an unexpected one.

Had Nick been one of the kind who is not always on his guard, and also had he not been somewhat warned by the remark that Kelly had made just before the introduction, the detective would have been killed or seriously wounded.

As it was, the knife pierced the sleeve of the detective's coat, for Nick saw the motion, of course, before he saw the knife, and dodged.

Instantly there was an uproar in the place, for the eyes of all the guests were fixed upon the table toward which Kelly was conducting a stranger in order to introduce him to Swipes.

Everybody saw the movement of throwing the knife; all saw the knife itself when it pierced the sleeve of the man at whom it was thrown; and all saw Kelly wheel savagely and deliver a left uppercut against Swipes' chin, which sent him to the floor senseless.

It all happened as rapidly as one might say one, two, three; and then Swipes was on the floor unconscious, knocked out by Kelly's lightninglike blow, and Nick Carter was coolly plucking the knife from his sleeve, while Kelly was trying to explain to him how it had all taken place.

"I can't say much for the politeness of your friends to whom you introduced me, don't you know," drawled the detective.

Many of the frequenters of the room had crowded around by this time, and all were clamoring for an explanation of that strange incident.

"Why, it's just this," said Kelly. "Maybe some of you will notice that this gentleman, who is a friend of mine, and who comes to me well recommended, looks like the detective, Nick Carter?"

There was a general murmur at that statement, but no reply; all were waiting for what was to be said next by the proprietor.

"Well, Swipes and I were talking together, and he wanted to know who the new guy was, when my friend here entered the room. I told Swipes that I thought he looked like Nick Carter."

"Don't look no more like him that you do, Kelly," said somebody on the outskirts of the crowd.

"Well," replied Kelly, not caring to follow up that particular subject, and realizing that he was now driven into a corner where, for the sake of his own reputation among his fellows, he must carry out the point he had made that the stranger was indeed an old acquaintance, "that is neither here nor there. The point is that I told Swipes that he does look like Carter; and as you will understand in a moment, he does look like Carter."

"He does not, I tell you. I know Carter by sight," insisted the interrupter.

"Wait," said Kelly. "I ain't through yet. Whether he does look like the great detective, Nick Carter, or whether he does not, I got Swipes worked up to the idea that he does."

"You all know why Swipes don't care to meet Carter just now?"

"Rather. Go on, Kelly."

"Well, my friend's name is Carter. Let me introduce him to you-all. He can get your mouchons later."

"Gentlemen and ladies, all, this is my friend, Mr. Ace Carter, from Australia. I'm standing for him and I want him accepted. Are you on? All right."

"Well, when I said to Swipes, 'This is Mr. Carter,' he up and chucks the knife without a word. That's the story, and now the drinks are on me, all around."

"Swipes has woke up," said somebody from the outskirts of the crowd.

"All right. Give him some brandy and tell him that I don't like to hit a one-armed man—and Swipes, can you hear me?"

"Yes," growled Swipes.

"We'll all forget this little incident this time, but I want to tell you now, so that you will understand it, that if you ever break the rules of my place again you go out of it never to come back, and every crook in New York who takes your hand after that won't be welcome here."

"How is that, boys?" concluded Kelly, facing the crowd of crooks.

"That goes, Kelly," was the hoarse response.

"No breaking rules, eh?"

"Nit."

"Good. Now shake hands all around with Ace Carter, and give him your own 'mouchons' while you're doing it. Here are our drinks. Take your seats and let us all drink to the health of the ace of clubs, for that's what he is."

"The ace of clubs. Hear! Hear!"

"I say, Ace," said Kelly, after the drink was swallowed and he had lighted a cigar, "I suppose when you and your brother, the ace of diamonds are together, you make quite a pair, don't you?"

"Well, we work together all right, if anybody should hit you with a sledge and ask you."

"Sort of win in the game, then, eh?"

"Yes, siree! That's about the time when aces are trumps."

"Aces are trumps! That's a good one! Boys, did you ever hear of a game where aces were trumps?"

"I reckon," said a New Orleans crook, "that it might be a hard game to play."

"Hard to play?" said Nick, laughing. "Not at all. It's easy—dead easy. Some day, when my brother arrives here, I will prove it to you. It's our own game, you know. We always play it together. We're both trumps, and we're both aces; so you see, when we are together, why, of course, aces are trumps."

CHAPTER IV.

NICK CARTER ACCEPTS A CHALLENGE.

As soon as introductions all around were about done with, Kelly drew Nick to one side, so that they were out of hearing of the others, and there was a cold, determined ring to his voice and a determined look in his eyes as he said slowly:

"Ace, you and I have got to make a little agreement of our own—on the side of this here general issue."

"Have we?" asked Nick. "What about?"

"Well, you see, the way things worked around I had to stand for you in a way that I don't like to do unless I know a man a good deal better than I do you."

"Well, that's all right, Kelly. You'll find that you haven't made any mistake."

"Maybe that's true, and again, maybe it ain't true."

I believe it is true—you can bank on that, 'cos if I didn't, I'd take mighty good care to see that you never had an opportunity to betray me."

"Well, what are you driving at, Kelly?"

"You see, when I let on to the boys that I knowed you all right, and that I'd vouch for you, I made you solid with the whole outfit. They'll take my word for it, and you're as welcome here among 'em now, and are as much one of 'em as if you had been born here in this room and hadn't ever seen any other faces but theirs in your life."

"I understand that, and I'm much obliged to you," said Nick, and there was a genuine ring of gratitude in his voice.

"That ain't it, Ace."

"Then what is it?"

"Why, as a matter of fact, I didn't know you anywhere near well enough to vouch for you, but the circumstances were such that I felt that I had to do it. It was up to me. That's all there was to it."

"And you did do it. You did it like a man and a good feller, and if the chance ever comes so that I can do you a good turn I won't forget it; betcher life on that."

"That's all right. I only want you to understand me. I don't, as a rule, take up a feller and stand for him unless I know more about him than I do about you; and so now I want to ask you a few questions."

"Fire away, Kelly."

"You spoke about Jack Gardner."

"Yes."

"Well, we thought over here that Jack was dead."

"I ain't to blame for what you thought."

"No; that's right. He ain't dead, then?"

"Not that I know about. He wasn't the last time that I saw him."

"And he sent you to me?"

"That's what he did."

"Did he give you any sign or any particular message for me?"

"No. It was this way. He said: 'If you get to York, Ace, look up Bob Kelly. Tell him I sent you, and he'll take you on your word for a while, but you'll have to supply your own credentials with Bob, because he only takes a man at his face value. When you go into his joint walk through to the back room, take your seat, and wait till somebody speaks to you. Don't get fresh, and while you are there act on the square.'

"That's all," concluded Nick. "He didn't say anything about passwords and all that."

Kelly stuck out his hand.

"Shake," he said. "I guess you're square, all right. If you ain't, why one of us will have to take the consequences. Anyhow, I won't go back on what I've said. I told the boys that I knowed you, and I'll stand for it. Shake again."

They shook again, and then, as many voices were calling them, they turned and joined the others.

And thus it will be seen how a slight accident worked in favor of Nick, and how his determination to work his case boldly, not only to look like Nick Carter, but actually to take the name of Carter, had already profited him so greatly.

But even Nick Carter did not realize how much the friendship of Bob Kelly meant to him among those men, but he was to be informed on that point before the night was over.

But other things were to happen before the real business of the night commenced, and Nick Carter was to be tried in many ways before he should be taken into the inner circle of the underworld's society in New York.

It has already been said that Monday nights were the occasions of unusual gatherings at Kelly's back room, and that it was "mob night."

The word "mob" is criminal vernacular for a partnership or company arrangement that is made between two or more crooks in their especial line of work.

For example, there may be a "bank mob," a "slicker mob," a "pickpocket mob," and so on, and each mob may have in its make-up as many men as are required to render its work successful, or to extend that work as greatly as possible.

Each member of a mob draws his share of the proceeds of the crime, according to his ability and cleverness at the game.

It was the habit at Kelly's on mob night for the members of each mob that met there to get by themselves in certain parts of the room, and there to discuss their business until it was satisfactorily arranged, after which each clique would break up and all the patrons of the place would begin to mingle with one another; and this condition usually happened about one in the morning—that is, after the front bar was closed and the street doors locked, so that nobody who was not personally known to Kelly or to one of his bartenders could get into the place.

At one o'clock, therefore, on each Monday night, Kelly always had something on hand to entertain his guests.

That was the time when the stage at the end of the room was utilized, and there were songs and speeches, boxing bouts, wrestling matches, and, in short, anything at all which would entertain the spectators.

Swipes, who had had his face sponged off, but who still looked as if he had been rather roughly handled, had been brought forward to Nick, and made to shake hands with Ace Carter, and to apologize for what he had done in the knife-throwing business.

The two were seated at a table together when the gong for one o'clock struck and everybody raised his or her eyes toward the stage with expectancy.

Kelly himself mounted the platform, and after bowing in acknowledgment of the storm of applause with which he was received, he said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I was unfortunate in regard to providing you with amusement for to-night. The fact is that all but one of the four people whom I had engaged to entertain you have disappointed me. Only one out of the four has showed up, and he is Paddy McGowan, the well-known and popular middle weight champion of the East Side."

Kelly paused to permit the applause to subside, and then continued:

"I had Tommy Derry engaged to meet him, but Tommy has sent word that he isn't in condition and can't come, so there ain't anybody to box with Paddy unless one of you will take up the challenge which he has told me to chuck down for him, which is, that he'll bet fifty dollars that there ain't a man in the room who will stand up before him for six rounds. Is there anybody here who wants to take that bet?"

There was dead silence for several minutes after Kelly ceased speaking, and he turned his eyes from one part

of the room to another and from face to face, in the vain search of somebody to accept the challenge.

In the meantime Nick Carter was thinking deeply.

"Here is an opportunity to make myself pretty solid with everybody here," he thought, "for I haven't a doubt that I can do Paddy McGowan to the queen's taste, and in very short order at that. I'll do it."

He rose slowly to his feet just at the moment when Kelly was on the point of giving up the quest.

"Hello, Ace," shouted the genial proprietor. "Do you mean to say that you are going to take up that offer of Paddy's?"

Every eye in the room was turned toward Nick and fixed upon him.

"No," replied Nick, who realized that it would not be well under the circumstances to let it appear that he was well provided with money. "I ain't a-goin' to take up the challenge, but I've got a proposition to make."

"What is it?"

"Well, you all know that I'm only just fresh arrived from Australia."

"Sure; go on."

"And of course I don't know anything about this cove you are talking about—Paddy McGowan, I think you called him."

"Yes, that's his name. Paddy's all right."

"Neither do I know what it means to be the middle-weight champion of the East Side."

"It means that he has licked everybody of his weight on his own side of the city. Now, Tommy Derry has done the same thing in this side of the city, and to-night I had made up a bout between them, to see which is the best man."

"Yes, I know that that part of it," said Nick. "What I want to know is if Paddy McGowan will take me on for the six rounds without the ten-pound bet."

Everybody in the room turned toward the spot where McGowan was seated, but that important personage shook his head in a very decided negative.

"You see," said Nick, "I haven't got that much money on me just now. I had to borrow the dough to get to this country, and there ain't anybody here who knows me well enough to back me, so—"

"Do you think you can do him, Ace?" asked Kelly.

"Sure thing," replied Nick.

"Don't be too cocksure. If you want to call his bluff I'll lend you the dough."

"Then I'm on," said Nick. "I suppose you've got the gloves."

"Gloves and tights; everything."

"Oh, I don't need any trunks to lick that fellow," said Nick, looking across the room toward McGowan and grinning at him in the most aggravating manner he could assume. "He looks dead easy—just a sort of a play-thing, don'tcher know?"

McGowan raised himself slowly to his feet and smiled back at him.

"It may be an Australian trick to say things, to make a fellow lose his nut," he said, "but I want to tell Ace Carter right here that that sort of thing don't spoil me. Shall we begin now, Kelly?"

Five minutes later Nick and the pugilist were facing each other across the platform. Seconds had volunteered to act for Nick, and Kelly himself assumed the duties of referee.

CHAPTER V.

KNOCKED OUT IN THE THIRD ROUND.

Notwithstanding the assertion made by the detective that he would not need to put on a pair of trunks in order to beat McGowan, he yielded to the importunities of Kelly and donned them.

In appearance, when the two men faced each other, Nick Carter seemed to be no match for his opponent, who was much taller and bigger in every way; but a careful observer would have noticed at once that the inequality stopped there.

When Nick stepped forward into view after arranging his dress for the bout, he was received with a vociferous round of applause, and many of the men among the spectators, who watched closely the liteness of his step as he came forward, signified their willingness to risk their money on him.

The odds were, of course, in favor of the man who was known, but they were not unusually large at that, and as soon as the fighters squared off, it was evident to everybody there that the supposed Australian knew his business.

McGowan, too, seemed to be overconfident.

He came forward to the scratch with a smile of patronage on his face that said almost as plainly as words could utter the idea:

"It's a shame to take his money, but I'll try not to hurt him too badly."

Both men were wary as they approached each other. It was Nick's policy to act on the defensive entirely until he could have a chance to study the action of his adversary, and so he sparred and dodged, ran in and jumped away, and otherwise kept McGowan guessing almost to the end of the round.

Paddy was still smiling with confidence.

Ace Carter's actions seemed entirely to support his idea of what might be expected of him.

Twice he let go a terrific left swing for the jaw, and both times he struck only the empty air.

Then, when the round was nearing the end, he thought he would rush things and mix them up a bit, and accordingly he neglected his caution for a moment and leaped forward with a rush to get inside of Nick's guard; and there he met with a surprise.

Something struck him in the pit of the stomach, and almost at the same instant a hard uppercut from Nick's left caught him on the point of the chin, and he went down on the floor with a thump that could be heard clear across the hall.

But he was not knocked out. Nick had not struck hard enough for that. He had by no means put his entire force in either of the blows, for already he had discovered that it would be an easy matter to knock Paddy out when he wanted to do so, and he did not care to end the fight just yet.

It was first blood for Nick, however, when Paddy struck the floor; and the bell that ended the round sounded as he was staggering to his feet, so both men retired to their corners.

There was a decided change in the feeling of the crowd by that time.

No longer were odds offered against the Ace, as they called Nick, and one facetious crook called out so that all could hear:

"I'll bet a hundred to seventy-five that aces are trumps in this little game."

He found a taker, and then the bell rang for the second round.

When the men faced each other for the second round, McGowan was more cautious than he had been before, and that confident smile had given place to one of fearless determination.

He still believed that he was the better man of the two, and that he would win out, but he had decided that it was not going to be nearly as much of a walkover as he had at first supposed.

The blow he had received in the pit of his stomach and the wallop on the jaw had decided him that it was well to be wary with this Australian opponent.

Twice again he tried the left swings that had failed so dismally in the first round; but, as before, they only sawed the air.

Then, suddenly, he shifted his feet and let go a vicious swing with his right; and he did it so quickly and so dexterously that Nick was almost caught napping. As it was, it landed with a jar that the detective felt all over him, and he smiled when he straightened up again.

That right swing with the quick shift just before it was Paddy's favorite blow and was usually saved until the last resort, and intended for a knock-out. A knock-out it would have been, undoubtedly, if it had landed; but it did not land, and Paddy was plainly surprised and puzzled as well as disappointed.

"That was a crackajack, Paddy," said Nick, smiling. "But you'd better not try it on again."

"Why not?"

"Well, I'll surprise you if you do; that's all."

Paddy, by this time, had made up his mind that the only thing for him to do was to rush the fighting, and to bear his opponent down by his superior weight, and after the failure of his right swing he adopted those tactics.

They failed, however, as his other efforts had failed.

Whenever he rushed and attempted to clinch, so as to bear his opponent down, his opponent was somehow not there when he arrived, and in each case he found that he was brought up with a sudden blow upon some portion of his body or face where he had the least idea of expecting it.

So the second round continued almost to the end, and so far, with the exception of the partial landing of that right swing in the early part of it, he had not touched his opponent anywhere, while he himself had been thumped around with an ease and constancy that was demoralizing.

Paddy was pretty sure, too, by this time, that the man who faced him in the ring was playing with him.

There had been several blows landed on him by the supposed Australian which he knew could have been delivered with much greater force if the man who gave them had cared to do so, and so, notwithstanding the warning that Nick had given him in the early part of the round, not to try that right swing again, he resolved to do so.

Again he tried one of the long left swings, and again he missed.

Then he shifted as he had done before, and the heavy right came around with its terrific force, enough to have knocked a horse off its feet if it had struck one fairly in the right spot.

It was the blow that had so nearly caught the detective

napping before; but this time Nick Carter was prepared for it.

Like Paddy's left swings, this one with the right encountered nothing more resisting than the air, for when it reached the point where it was supposed to be stopped by the person of the opponent there was no opponent there to take its force.

Nick had ducked, and the blow sailed away over his head, and with such force that, meeting no resistance, it swung Paddy somewhat off his balance, and then—
Biff! Bang!

Nick's right and left followed each other so quickly that the two blows seemed almost like one, and they landed, one on the right of the jaw and the other on the point of the chin.

Paddy slipped to the floor as if somebody had dropped him there from a second-story window, and he made no effort to get up, either.

Kelly stood over him and began the count, but before he had reached four, the bell rang, and thus the champion of the East Side was saved by the bell for another round.

And now the back room at Kelly's was a place of great excitement.

Everybody who had so far made no bets on the result now offered two, three, and in one case even five to one on this Australian wonder, but with no takers; and those who had bet against him sought by every device they could think of to hedge.

In the meantime Nick sat in his corner, where his seconds were fanning him with towels, and smiled down upon the crowd. There was not a scratch on his face; in fact, his face had not been touched since the bout began.

Over in the other corner Paddy was looking very much the worse for wear.

But he was game, and he stood punishment marvelously well; so well, indeed, that Nick Carter felt sorry for him.

When the bell rang and they faced each other for the third round, Nick, wishing to do him a kindness, whispered so that nobody else could hear him:

"Paddy, shall I end it all in this round, or would you like to have it continue?"

That question was the last straw so far as Paddy McGowan was concerned.

He had announced before the bout began that nothing could make him lose his temper, but he lost it then.

"I'll show you when to end it, you faker!" he yelled out so that all in the room could hear him. "I'll show you how to finish it, too! You think, just because you have had the best of it for two rounds that you can do me? Not much."

Nick only smiled, and said nothing. The spectators applauded.

"Who are you, anyhow?" roared Paddy, wasting his breath in useless vituperation. "You are somebody that Bob Kelly has brought here to ring in on me and do me up, I suppose! But I'll show you that you can't do anything up, you—"

A left hander in the mouth spoiled the remainder of that sentence, and sent Paddy back against the ropes with a grunt.

This time Nick did not follow up his advantage, but he stepped back toward the center of the ring and waited calmly.

Having discovered that he could make his opponent angry, he was resolved to do so now to the end, and he began to taunt him.

"Come back here to the center of the ring," he said, laughing. "What are you waiting over there for? Do you want me to walk over and carry you back so that I can take another whack at you?"

It was all too much for Paddy.

He turned with a cry of rage and rushed with all his strength and without the least kind of guard toward Nick, and it was the last rush of the bout.

Nick stepped back and waited, and then, with an audible remark which sounded very much as if he had said, "I hate to do it!" he struck Paddy for the third time during the fight, on the point of the chin.

This time, however, it was a regular Nick Carter blow; it was no plaything.

When it landed Paddy seemed to straighten up as if he stood on his toes for an instant, and then to shoot backward to the floor.

His head struck the planks before his body, and he laid there like a graven image while the referee slowly counted him out.

CHAPTER VI.

A CRACKAJACK BANK BURGLAR.

Ace Carter, as he was called, was the lion of the hour when he resumed his clothing and stepped down from the platform among the spectators.

Every man and woman there wanted to shake hands with him, and the table at which he seated himself was soon the center of interest in the room.

Nick Carter instantly made himself solid in other ways as well.

His first remark, as soon as he was comfortably seated, was to Kelly:

"I say, Bob, old chap," he called, "would you mind telling Paddy, when he comes to, that I hope there are no bad feelings about this, and that I'd be glad if he would join me here at the table and help me to spend that fifty. Paddy is a good fellow, only I'm a little too much for him, that's all. Drinks are on me, Bob; three times around and a tiger."

"Hurrah for the ace of trumps!" called out somebody, and the cheer was taken up with a will, only to be nipped quickly in the bud by Kelly, who said, in his quiet voice:

"It's after one o'clock, boys! No noise."

Paddy wobbled over to the table after a while and shook hands with his late opponent; and then, in order to drown his sorrows, he proceeded to fill up with liquor with all the rapidity that was possible, so that it was not long before Kelly had him carried upstairs and tucked in for the night.

After that the crowd began to dwindle, as those who had made a part of it went their several ways.

There were many who had business to do yet, that night, for there was a house-breaking mob in the outfit, and it had staked out some work for that very night, or more correctly speaking, morning.

Finally Nick turned to Kelly, and remarked:

"I don't know whether you've got a place to put me up or not, Kelly, but if you haven't, maybe you'll direct

me to a good cozy bunk. You know I'm a stranger here, and—"

"Just wait a minute, Ace," said Kelly. "I think I can fix you all right."

The proprietor stepped away to one side, and then one by one called several of the men who remained to one side, and seemed to consult them.

The women were all gone by this time, and there were only a dozen men left in the room, including Kelly and Nick, for it was now getting toward daylight, and most of the denizens of that room had a strong dislike for sunlight.

Swipes, who was still there, was among the few whom Kelly called aside for consultation, and it was Swipes who seemed to stand out against the proposition, whatever it was, advanced by Kelly.

But the others seemed, without exception, to be in favor of it, and the result was that Swipes was overruled, and presently they all returned to the table where Nick was seated.

There was one man in the party with whom Nick had thus far not exchanged a word.

He had noticed him at once, when he entered the place, but even then the man had seemed to desire to keep apart from the others.

Often during the time Nick had been there, he had turned his eyes in the direction of this particular man, only to discover that he still preserved his quietude of manner and silence of demeanor, and that the others seemed tacitly to respect his wish to be left alone.

Now, however, it was this man who spoke.

"Kelly has made us a proposition concerning you," he said, "but it may be that you won't care to consider it yourself."

"I can answer that when you tell me what the proposition is," replied Nick.

"Well, he wants us to take you into the family, so to speak, as one of us, that's all. We're thinking about doing it."

"It depends," said Nick, "upon what sort of a family life you've got on hand to offer me, whether I want to go into it or not."

"Do you expect to stay in New York?"

"That depends," said Nick. "I haven't tied any strings to me yet."

"What's your lay?"

"Banking business," drawled Nick. "The securities sort of run out at home. Besides, you may know that in my country, when they give you the grand bounce from the stone palace, they've got a way of keeping a weather eye on you. I concluded that I'd light out."

"How long were you away?"

"A fiver."

"That wasn't bad—for a banker."

"Well, this one wasn't, a bank job where they busted me. I've always been mighty particular not to get stalled on that sort of a lay. It means anywhere from a tenner to a twenty in my old stamping ground."

"I suppose so. What were you put away for?"

"For playing one of my aces of trumps altogether too quick to suit the other party."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, with my brother and me aces are always trumps. We always carry five each in every hand we play."

Nick paused, but preserved the appearance of not having finished what he had to say, so that nobody spoke.

Then he took a common playing card from a deck that he carried in one of his pockets, and passed it across the table toward his questioner.

"If you'll just toss that card into the air, and Kelly won't mind the sound of a little noise—it's daylight now—I'll show you what I mean," he said.

The man took the card from Nick's hand, and without waiting for Kelly's permission, or for Nick to prepare for what he had to do, if anything, tossed the card at once in the air, evidently with the intention of calling the bluff in such a way as to place the stranger at a disadvantage.

Nick was, however, prepared.

The card had no sooner mounted into the air over the heads of those who were seated at the table than his right hand shot out, there was a flash and a sharp report and the card fluttered to the floor with a hole exactly through its center.

Nobody there had expected such an outcome of the proposition, and they all leaped to their feet with cries of surprise, and in one case, of alarm, for the card had not been very far above the head of the man who threw it when Nick fired, and the bullet must necessarily have passed quite close to him.

Nevertheless, he was the coolest one there as the others resumed their seats, and the card fell downward.

Nick stretched himself back in his chair and thrust his hands into his pockets, as he said, very quietly:

"That is what I mean when I said that aces are trumps, and that I always carry five of them in each hand."

The man who had been questioning him stooped over and lifted the card from the floor.

Then he inspected it closely for a moment, and having measured with his eye the distance from either end and side of the card, to the bullet hole in its center, he said coolly:

"The hole is through the center of the card; there is no doubt of that. But where is the gun?"

"Right here," replied Nick. "Right here, where it's handy, in case it comes my turn to play."

"Do you mind showing it to us?"

"Not at all if you will toss that card into the air again. You thought you were going to fool me the last time. You won't think so again, will you?"

"No more pistol shots in this place," said Kelly decidedly. "I wouldn't have allowed that one, Ace, if I had suspected that you were going to show that old trick of yours."

Nick grinned as he thought to himself:

"The old man is working overtime in making the boys believe he has known me always, and he is doing it just to keep himself out of a hole."

"Nobody here saw the gun when you fired," continued the spokesman.

"Well," said Nick, "maybe that ain't my fault, and then maybe it is; but say, mister, I make it a point never to show them five aces unless I need them in my business; so you won't insist, I hope."

The remark was drawled very slowly, but there was none the less a menace in it, which every person there recognized, and the man addressed, most of all.

"No," he replied coolly, "I won't insist." Then, quite abruptly, he changed the subject.

"I used to know Jack Gardner," he said.

"Did you?" asked Nick.

"Yes. Would you mind telling me what sort of a looker he is?"

"Never saw him in my life," replied Nick.

"No? I understood Kelly to say that you——"

"If my eyes were gimlets, maybe I might have had a squint at him, provided the gimlets were long enough. You see, mister noname——"

"Oh, I will have to apologize. I thought you had my monchon. I'm Witherspoon—Jack, for short."

Nick leaped from his chair and extended his hand across the table with every evidence of joy in his expression, while at the same time he was really surprised, for Jack Witherspoon was known to be the most expert bank burglar in the world, at that time, and also one who had managed for years to keep under cover so thoroughly that his picture had never got into the rogues' gallery, and it was doubtful if there were half a dozen police officers in the world who could give half a description of him.

"I'm glad to know you, Jack," said Nick heartily. "It's a great honor. One of the reasons why I came here was in the hope of meeting you."

"All right, Ace. Let it go at that. I think we'll be good friends yet. Now what were you about to say when I interrupted you?"

"Well, I was just going to add that while I could do something in the line of shooting and fighting, I wasn't any good at seeing through a stone wall, and I'd have had to do that in order to describe Jack Gardner to you, because that's the nearest I ever got to seeing him. We did our talking by tapping on the wall."

"Well, Ace, I guess you're all right. You've passed a pretty good exam here to-night, and, besides, Kelly vouches for you. Now, please answer one question: You want a pal, don't you?"

"Sure thing."

"Well, if you get a pal here you will have to join the trust; and if you want to join the trust we're prepared to make you a member at once, if you will place yourself in our hands and come with us. What do you say to that, Ace?"

"What do I say? I say, shake again. I'm with you, and I shouldn't wonder if this is about the proudest moment of my life."

CHAPTER VII.

THE BIGGEST CRIMINAL SCHEME.

"We've got a place of meeting that is as novel as it is original," said Witherspoon, rising from his chair, "and this is the day fixed for our convention. We're about due there now. Do you think you would like to go with us, Ace?"

"Sure thing," replied Nick heartily, "I'm with you, if you'll take me on."

"Well, it's a new thing to take anybody on until he has proved himself, but on account of Kelly, of what you have done to-night, and of my own impressions concerning you, I have decided to take the risk.

"It is only fair to warn you, though, that there won't be a minute until you are thoroughly proved when you won't be watched, and at the first indication on the part of any member of treachery, he goes up the 'escape' without warning. You savvy?"

"Sure, Mike; I savvy, all right."

"You'll take the chance?"

"I've been taking chances all my life. I'm not going to get behind one now."

"Good. I say, what's your first name, when they don't call you Ace?"

"Nick."

"Nick! The devil!"

"What's the matter?"

"Did you ever happen to hear of a Nick Carter who lives in this country?"

"Oh, a little. Not very much, though. He's a detective, ain't he?"

"Yes; and he's a honey cooler, too."

Nick chuckled audibly. Then he shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Guys of that stripe don't bother this chicken very much," he said.

"This one would if he got after you."

"Maybe. I doubt it, though, I'm not afraid of him, anyway."

"By Jove! old man, I'd like to set you on his track," cried Witherspoon.

"Well, why don't you? It would be a good way for me to prove myself, wouldn't it?"

"Out of sight, only it ain't possible, just now. Perhaps you can try your hand later on."

"Why?"

"Because he's out of the country. He has just sailed away for the other side."

"Well, I'll take him on when he comes back. I don't like to have a guy of his description chasing around with my couchon."

"It's a bully idea," said Witherspoon. "I'll put it up to the boys before the day is over. Are you ready to come along now?"

"Yes. Where do we go?"

"Do you know your way around this town?"

"No, not very well; but I suppose I can find it. Never been lost yet."

"Let me see," said the bank burglar. "How many of us are going? Are you, Kelly?"

"No. You're all going but Swipes and me. Swipes can't be seen just now——"

"You just let me speak for myself," interrupted Swipes savagely. "I'm going to that meeting if there's a fly cop on every corner on the way there looking for me. I'm going, I tell you, and that settles it."

"How?" asked Kelly derisively.

"Easy enough. I've got a delivery wagon coming here for me; it's probably outside now. I've got a friend who drives it and he'll drop me at the ferry. I'll take my chances after that, but you can bet your life I'll be there."

"Well," said Witherspoon, "you can all skip out now and make your several ways there as best you can, only remember that if you are not there by twelve, noon, you won't be admitted on board."

"Ace Carter and I will be together. I'll engage to take him there. We ain't either of us known by the police, so I think we'll get along without any trouble, and, Kelly, I think you had better change your mind and go—on your friend's account."

"All right. I'll go."

"Then, so long. We'll leave you now. Remember, be there before noon."

He put his hat on his head, gloves on his hands, and took a cane from one corner of the room. Then he nodded to Nick and started toward the door.

"I'd better hump along behind you," said Nick, when they reached the street. "My clothes aren't as good as yours."

"Never mind that. We'll attract less attention for that very fact."

"Would you mind telling me something about the game?" asked Nick, when they were seated together in an elevated train and were speeding in the direction of South Ferry. "What is the meeting, and what did you mean by the trust?"

"Well, I don't mind giving you a general idea of it."

"I'll be much obliged to you if you will."

"Well, it's this way: You see, the police is pretty fairly well organized all over the world, and the police, of course, are our enemies."

"Sure thing."

"Some time ago it occurred to me that if we, in our business, wanted to cope with the police of the world and meet with anything like success in our undertakings, it was necessary that we should organize, even more thoroughly than they do."

"I'm beginning to catch on."

"Well, I planned the whole thing out myself. I started by getting a small organization into shape, made up of the best and the most intelligent crooks that I could find.

"I went from here to the Pacific coast to find them, but I found them, you bet."

"How many?" asked Nick.

"Well, I began with two from each State which was to have representation, and that included only the States which have respectable sized cities in them.

"After a while, of course, we'll take them all in, but I had to begin with what I could get."

"How many States have you got represented now?"

"Twenty-two out of the forty-eight. That isn't bad, is it, now?"

"No; go ahead—you interest me."

"Well, I acted as a committee of one in making the preliminary arrangements, but I succeeded, and so about six months ago we had a meeting in Chicago, and every one of the men I had selected showed up. It was great."

"I should think it was. Well?"

"We mapped out a regular organization to cover all the States, arranged something on the lines of Congress.

"We're going to have a regular meeting of two delegates from each State once a year after this. Then, besides that, each State has its own State organization, and then there are as many suborganizations in different parts of each State as there are guns enough to organize." Don't you see how it works?"

"Not quite. Go ahead."

"Well, if you are only an ordinary pickpocket, without a reputation, you can't expect to get into good society at one hand, can you?"

"No-o-o," said Nick.

"You join a mob in that case, and the mob has one member who is a member of our society. Just as fast as that particular member recommends his friends, they are taken into the society also, in what we call 'First Street.'"

"First Street? What does that mean?"

"Well, First Street is the same as the first degree of a society. If you were a member now, and you should give me a sign so that I would know you to be one, I'd ask you where you lived or where you were going, and you would reply by saying that you were bound for First Street or Second Street or Third Street, and so on as the case might be, and thus I would know how far up you had got in the order.

"First Street reports to Second Street, which means that there must be at least one member of every lodge of the First Street who also belongs to Second; and that works on up through the list.

"We think them out as they get higher; and up at the top there are only a few members in each city or locality. I tell you, we've got the organization mighty perfect, considering the time we have been at it."

"I should think you had."

"One reason why I want you, Ace, is to send you back to Australia after a while, to continue the organization there. I want to make it international. I want to extend it all over the world."

"If you do that there won't be any limitation to your power, will there?"

"No. There isn't much now."

"It's great!"

"Here's the point: The police have organized against us; now we have organized against the police. Do you get me?"

"I see."

"No, you don't—yet. Every man, no matter who he is, pays a certain amount into the fund. That fund is to defend our members, to buy judges and juries, wardens and guards, and to assist in every way possible, the escape of a man who has been pinched. That is one point."

"Yes."

"Well, there is another department which warns and threatens judges, juries, officers, and everybody who has anything to do with putting away one of our members. He is told what will happen to him if he don't consent to do as we ask him, and there are preparations on foot to get things in shape so that we can make things happen without any danger of being caught. Your namesake, the other Nick Carter, is one of the first we are going to get after."

"And you are going to set me on to him, eh?"

"Perhaps. We haven't got to that yet. Then there is another branch, with a fund connected with it."

"What is that?"

"Well, we want clerks of the courts, clerks of banks, railroad men, hotel clerks—everybody, in fact, who holds positions of trust—we want them in the membership of our society. We want to subsidize a lot of them whom we cannot hope to have for members. Don't you see, Ace, that there is no end to the possibilities of what we can accomplish by this scheme if it is carried far enough?"

"It is certainly a most stupendous undertaking."

"Stupendous? Why, I don't think that I am far wrong when I say that if you will give me ten years of successful work at the organization of this scheme I can undertake to clean out the vaults of the United States treasury itself, and without the least danger of getting caught at it, either. What do you think of that?"

"I think," replied Nick slowly, "that I am most fortunate in making your acquaintance—most fortunate, indeed."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FLY COP.

The meeting place for the criminal trust was indeed unique, and in a way it demonstrated to the detective something of the gathering and increasing power of the associated crooks.

In brief, they held their meeting at a place no less important than an anchored steamship down the bay.

Crackjacks Witherspoon and Nick crossed the Thirtieth Street Ferry from Whitehall Street to Brooklyn, and then, having strolled down along the water front for about half a mile, made their way out along the interminable docks, through alleyways between warehouses and offices, and at last arrived at the end of a pier; and from the end of the pier the bank burglar waved his handkerchief several times until at last a motor boat put off from the anchored steamer and presently placed them aboard of her.

"This is fine," said Nick; "but how do you work it? How do the others get on board?"

"That," replied Witherspoon, with a smile, "is their lookout, and not ours. "It is the policy of our trust that each man must look out for himself until he gets to a point where it is impossible for him to do so; then we look out for him.

"In a matter like getting aboard of this steamer, for instance, each man who is wanted here is told that the meeting will be at a certain time. Then it is up to him to get here."

"I see. He can make any arrangements he wants to for coming, so long as he is here on time."

"Yes. He can come in an aeroplane, if he wishes; and if he is not here on time he is not admitted. There are no exceptions to that rule."

"You spoke about the several degrees; which one is this meeting to-day?"

"Which degree?"

"Yes."

"Well, Ace, I'll tell you. The fact is we have decided to take you in at the top."

"I don't understand."

"You are just the sort of man we want—just the sort we have been looking for."

"How so?"

"Well, you can do things. You're alive. I liked your face the minute I saw you. I liked your manner when you entered the back room at Kelly's. I liked your silence and the fact that you minded your own business. I liked the cool way in which you dodged the knife that Swipes chucked at you, the way you took it from your sleeve and paid no further attention to the episode after it was over. I liked your method of licking Paddy, and when you put that hole through the card you won my heart right there.

"Best of all, I liked your replies when I was talking to you, for I could see that you are not afraid of anything or of any man, that you are not one of the kind that gets rattled, and that you are perfectly able to take care of yourself, and perhaps two or three others, in any emergency."

"I suppose I ought to blush, or get up and make a bow, or blow, or do something, after all that," said Nick, with a smile.

"No, I'm giving it to you straight off the reel. You are the man I've been looking for—the man I need. I

had long made up my mind that when I found somebody like you I'd take him in on a run. I'm not easy to approach, but when I take to a feller I do it all over for fair. The fact is, Ace, you are going into this thing at the top notch, along with the original organizers. They'll all be here to-day."

"I thought you were the original organizer."

"I am. Kelly and I are; but there are others, of course."

"Is Swipes one of them?"

"Yes. Swipes and his Dutch uncle. You haven't seen him, have you?"

"Who is he?"

"Hans Pretzel. He's a character and a bad man. He's the captain of this ship, when he is where he belongs. Lately he has been running a steam canal boat up the Hudson to a place where one of the First Street gang had headquarters.

"Nick Carter, your namesake, got on their trail and did them up. They captured Swipes and sent him to the pen. He's just escaped, which accounts for his broken arm. Big Hans had a tussle with the detective and took a fall over the cliff, which would have killed an ordinary man, but it didn't much more than give him a good shaking up. He was taken to the hospital, and last night it was arranged to get him out of there, so I suppose he will be here to-day with the others."

When they arrived aboard the steamer, Witherspoon conducted Nick at once to the cabin, where already there were about a score of aristocratic crooks assembled.

Swipes had not yet arrived, but Hans was said to be aboard the ship, although at the moment of Nick's entrance he was not visible.

Nick, in the character of Ace Carter, was introduced all around by Witherspoon, and then for the time the detective realized what a risk he had run in coming to such a place almost without disguise, and trusting to his assurance to carry him through.

He realized now, when it was too late to make a change in his plans, that he was to be brought face to face with some of the shrewdest and sharpest men in the world, and that while, notwithstanding their shrewdness and sharpness, he might have deceived them had he adopted some disguise, it was more than likely that there would be one or more among these men who would recognize him for what he really was—Nick Carter, the detective.

And among the aggregation of criminal intelligence the bluff he had put up with the others, of being an Australian, but of wearing the same mouchon as the detective, would only serve to heighten their suspicions, and he felt when he entered the cabin that he was certainly "up against it awful hard," for once in his life.

Again, he had in no wise reckoned on the presence of Hans Pretzel, whom he believed to be in the criminal ward at Bellevue Hospital, and the fact that he had been freed and was already on board the steamer, only went to prove the thoroughness of the utility of the methods of the criminal trust.

Hans Pretzel was a criminal with a long record. He had been on the turf in New York since Nick Carter was a boy. He had been arrested many times by the father of Nick Carter, now long since dead. He had seen Nick himself as a boy, and he had seen him many times since Nick had taken up his father's business and continued it with such phenomenal success.

"It is a hundred to one that Hans will spot me," was

Nick's thought as he took his seat in the cabin. "but it is too late to change my plans now, and I must do one of two things—bluff it through or fight."

Fortunately, when they arrived there was nobody there to whom it occurred to suspect the detective of being other than he was represented, and Nick was able to take an obscure seat in the background, for the time being. He knew, however, that the sense of momentary security he felt then would not be of long duration.

As the hours of the forenoon lengthened there were more arrivals on board the steamer, and by eleven-thirty o'clock Nick could count forty-two members present.

Swipes had made his appearance, and then disappeared, probably to go forward and consult with Hans, Nick thought, for Hans was still absent, although reported to be on board.

Then a few minutes before twelve, Hans and Swipes came into the big cabin and took seats, several of the men were sent out on the deck to stand guard, the door was locked, and the high priest of the gathering, Crackajack Witherspoon, took his place at the head of the long table and called the meeting to order.

Nick, still in the background, watched narrowly every move that was made.

Several times a quick glance in the direction of the places where Swipes and Hans were seated together, discovered them watching him furtively, and from time to time he could see that they exchanged glances and whispered together.

With the intuition that often comes to use in moments of danger, Nick realized that his identity was at least suspected by those men, and that he would have a hard time before the meeting should adjourn, and with a grim smile of determination not to be beaten, even by such overwhelming numbers, Nick prepared himself for the worst that could happen.

Still, as the proceedings continued, and the two men made no move, he began to wonder if he had not been mistaken, after all.

But he was destined soon to discover that he had not.

There was no roll call. Instead of that, each man was called upon in turn to walk forward to the table and sign his name in a book that was spread out in front of Witherspoon; and Nick, keeping his eyes on the men as they went forward in turn, was wondering if he would be requested to do the same thing.

He was, however, left till the last.

When every man there save himself had gone forward, and he was the only one who remained, there was a sudden lull in the proceedings, and every eye was turned in his direction.

Nick retained his seat, although, he knew that something was expected of him; but he was resolved to wait till he was summoned; and then Witherspoon slowly got upon his feet.

"Brothers," he said, addressing the room at large, "I have a piece of good news for you to-day, for I have been fortunate in discovering, through our brother, Bob Kelly, a valuable acquisition to our trust. I have taken this new man under my own wing and I have brought him here on my own responsibility. I don't think that any of you will deny me the right to do that."

He paused an instant, as if to give emphasis to his words, and evidently did not expect a reply of any sort; but there was a response—from Hans.

"Vell, Crackajack Witherspoon," he said, "ve don't deny you de right to do somethings like dot, but ve also don't deny ourselves mit de right to kevestion de circumstance."

"All right," said Witherspoon, smiling. "I know you are a kicker, Hans, I'll give you an opportunity to ask all the questions you want to, presently."

"What I want to say now," continued Witherspoon, "is that this new man is here in this cabin with us. I brought him here. There are a few of us here who were in the back room at Kelly's last light, when this man proved how well he could take care of himself. He knocked out Paddy McGowan to the queen's taste, and he shot a hole through a card better than Ira Paine could have done it if he were alive and there."

"Mebbe he did dot," broke in Hans again, "but you don't vant to forget dot he didn't do it no better than von other mans I could mentions."

"Who is that?" asked Witherspoon, falling into the trap that Hans had laid.

"He didn't do it no better dan Nick Carter could haf done it," said Hans, slowly and impressively. "Und do you know vy he didn't do it no better dan Nick Carter could haf done it? I vill told you, shentlemens. It is because dot man iss Nick Carter himself—Nick Carter, de detective, and I, Hans Fretzel, vill prove it to you to beat de pand. He has valked, like de fly cop he is, shust straight into de schpider's parlor, und if you let him escape now, vell, den you iss all tam fools!"

CHAPTER IX.

CALMLY STARING DEATH IN THE FACE.

When Hans Pretzel finished his statement the silence in the ship's cabin was intense.

Every eye in the place was turned upon Nick, and everybody waited for him to reply; while after that first breathless interval of silence there came an ominous clicking sound that began at one end of the assemblage and continued around to the other end, almost with the regularity of the ticking of a clock.

Nick Carter recognized the sound perfectly well, but he made no outward sign that he did so.

The noise was made by the cocking of revolvers, and the detective realized that there were at least more than thirty of them there, ready to use against him unless he could establish the utter falsity of Hans Pretzel's statement.

It was a tight place, and a moment filled with foreboding, indeed.

Nobody spoke. Everybody waited for the accused man to reply.

Even Witherspoon was silent, for he saw that the occasion had got beyond his control, and it was now "up to" his protégé to clear himself of the accusation.

In the cabin of a steamship anchored out in the middle of New York Bay, surrounded by forty-two men with drawn and cocked revolvers, with no discoverable opportunity to escape, and with the majority of those forty-two men between him and the door, things did look very dark for the detective.

Nevertheless his face was as smiling as ever, and his nerve was as unshaken.

When an emergency like the present one confronted him, Nick Carter rose to the occasion.

There was no bunking, no hesitancy to the consequences in his make-up.

He had never seen a time in his life when he had felt the emotion of fear, and he certainly did not feel it now, although nobody could realize more thoroughly than he did the absolutely desperate circumstance that faced him.

He rose to his feet slowly, and looked coolly around him, from face to face, smiling, debonaire, outwardly indifferent to the charge that had just been made, but which was intended to mean life or death to him.

As he stood upon his feet he thrust his hands into the side pockets of his coat, and instantly, from the far end of the cabin, the gruff voice of Hans called out:

"Shust took dose hands mit your pockets oud, Herr Carter, 'r I'll bore you!"

Nick looked across at the Dutchman, and still kept his hands in his pockets, although Hans had leveled a revolver straight at his heart. Then he turned his gaze toward Witherspoon, and said coolly:

"I don't know who the Dutchman is, Jack, but it strikes me that you ought to change places with him. He seems to be running this outfit. If he is, then I will sit down."

Witherspoon wheeled in his chair and faced Hans.

"Put that gun in your pocket and put it there quick," he ordered, in no uncertain tone. "If you don't, you'll be the first dead man on this ship."

Hans scowled, but he obeyed, and then Witherspoon turned again to Nick.

"Go ahead, Ace," he said. "You shall have every chance in the world to prove to us that the Dutchman is a liar, or mistaken."

"I don't think it is up to me to attempt to prove that he is a liar," said Nick slowly.

"Why?" questioned Witherspoon.

"Because," replied Nick, "he has made a statement. Let him prove it. I didn't ask to be brought here. You asked me to come. I'm a stranger. I gave you my record—that is, all of it that you asked for. Hans, as you call him, says that my name is Nick Carter; well, I have already told you that my name is Nick Carter. What of it?"

There was a loud murmur among the men sitting around the cabin, and one of them called out:

"Do you mean that you admit that you are Nick Carter?"

"I have said that such is my name. What of it?"

"Well, of all the gall——"

"Hold on," interrupted Witherspoon, doing exactly what Nick intended that he should do, "you don't understand. His name happens to be the same as the name of the detective. He doesn't mean that he is the same man. It isn't strange that there should be two men in the world by the name of Nick Carter, is it? Carter is not an uncommon name, neither is Nick."

"Well," said Hans, "some of os are t'inking dot it iss mighty funny, alrealy. Look here, Crackjack, I vas hear about dot leetle fight at Kelly's last night, and let me tole you dot Nick Carter iss a mans vot could gif Jack Johnson de best run for his moneys of any man in de world to-day. Und den dot shooting of de card; dot vas a t'ing vot Nick Carter could do, und do easy—dead easy, for I haf seen him do it. But dot aind all, not by a long shot."

"Well, what else?"

"Vy, dis: I haf known Nick Carter mit my own eyes since he vas a leetle poy, and I recognize him, de same as I would recognize you, Crackjack, if I should meet you

anywere. I recognize him. I know him ven I see him, und I say it iss him. Vot?"

Again all eyes were turned upon Nick, who still stood with his hands in his pockets, the picture of calm indifference.

"What have you got to say to that, Ace?" asked Witherspoon.

"What can I say?" replied Nick. "The Dutchman is mistaken, that's all. He thinks he is right. I don't blame him in the least. I should not have been brought here until I had been investigated. It's a cinch that I wouldn't have come if I had foreseen this."

"Is there another person here who has anything to say on this subject?" asked Witherspoon.

"Yes, I have," said Swipes.

"What is it?"

"Well, I received a note from a friend of mine who is a fireman, just before I came over here. I'll read it. 'Dear Swipes,' he says, 'here's a pointer: The smashing of the black Maria was a put-up job. Nick Carter put it up. There's something behind it. Look out.'

"There is the letter I got," and Swipes waved a piece of paper over his head, so that all could see.

"That's why I escaped. That's why I haven't been pinched since I did escape," he continued. "Carter wanted me free, for some purpose of his own. I think you fellers are all a lot of dubs to let him pull the wool over your eyes as he has. Kelly says he's known this fellar all his life. Well, I think Bob Kelly is a liar, and——"

Swipes got no farther than that in his statement. Kelly was seated half a dozen chairs away from Swipes, and when the latter called him a liar he leaped to his feet with a bound, and before anybody could interfere he had lifted Swipes clear from his chair, struck him one terrific blow in the face, and flung him head first across the table, scattering books, plates, bottles, and glasses into a confused and crashing heap upon the floor.

For an instant all was confusion.

Everybody left his chair. All sprang forward toward the center of trouble.

It was strictly against the rules of the organization that there should be violence at their meetings, and every one there deemed himself called upon to make every effort to prevent it.

For just the briefest possible fraction of time everybody forgot the man who was the real cause of the trouble—that is, everybody except Hans, who was altogether too intent upon proving his case and too old a bird at crime and its accompaniments to permit his attention to be distracted by such things as a blow and a few broken glasses.

Nevertheless there was that slight interval, and Nick Carter made the most of it.

In that instant, when every eye was turned toward Kelly and Swipes, and when everybody in the cabin started in their direction, Nick dropped to his hands and knees, darted under the long cabin table, and with all the quickness of which he was master, traveled its length beneath it, emerged, still bent double, between two of the men at the other end, who were still leaning across it and endeavoring to restore order, raised himself to his feet, and with one bound reached the companionway which led to the cabin door that opened on the deck.

Another leap took him up the stairs toward the door, and he had reached it and had it almost open, when there

came a cry of warning from behind him, and then the quick bang! bang! of two revolver shots.

Nick felt one of the bullets graze against his shoulder enough to sting him, and the other whizzed past his ear and buried itself in the woodwork beside the door; but the next instant he had passed out of the door leading to the deck.

It was the voice of Hans that had cried out the warning, and Nick knew that the bullets which had so narrowly missed him had come from Hans' revolver.

He knew, also, that his escape was already discovered, and that there would not be two seconds before the forty thieves would be rushing upon the deck after him, and in those two seconds he must do something to protect himself or to make good his escape.

The companionway which led from the cabin to the deck turned sharply to the right, halfway in the ascent, and there, at the turn, there was a small door, which evidently opened into the 'tween-decks and led to the forward part of the ship.

Nick knew perfectly well that the guard outside on the deck would be warned by the sound of the two pistol shots that something out of the ordinary was taking place below, and that if he burst out upon them on the run he would not only meet with a warm reception, but he would also stand a very poor chance to make good his escape.

For just one instant he was out of sight of everybody, before that narrow door in the bulkhead, and he opened it, stepped through, and closed it behind him.

Scarcely had it clicked fast when he heard the sounds made by rushing feet as his pursuers dashed past toward the deck; and he could hear, them as they tumbled over one another in their haste.

He knew that they would very quickly discover that he had not appeared upon the deck at all, and that they would dash back again into the companionway in search of him; that they would remember, or discover the narrow door, and that without question they would decide that he had gone that way, and hence there remained only one thing for him to do—and he did it.

As soon as they had rushed past him, he reopened the door, stepped out again into the companionway, and descended the stairs into the cabin again.

There was no other way for him to do than to hide successfully until the first spasmodic search for him had exhausted itself, and then, if possible, to make his escape, and if not, to fight his way out as best he could.

As he ran down the stairs, he hoped that all had rushed out of the cabin in search of him, and when he had reached it, he discovered to his satisfaction that all had gone—all save one.

Swipes was still there, where he had fallen after the blow from the fist of Kelly—and Swipes was reviving.

However, he had not yet opened his eyes, and the noise made by the rushing feet on the deck prevented him from hearing the detective as he glided past him toward the far end of the cabin.

CHAPTER X.

SWIPES' REVENGE.

The steamer was what is generally known as a tramp, but she had once been in the passenger service on a Southern route, and she still preserved some of the trimmings and decorations of that experience.

The cabin in which the scenes already described took place was what had once been the Social Saloon of the vessel, and while many of the decorations as well as the staterooms had been torn out to make room for other things, there was still many of them remaining.

Two of the old staterooms, one on the starboard and one on the port side of the vessel, had been transformed into alcoves, and there were curtains draped in front of them—and also, the hog frame of the ship happened to descend through the deck at that very point, and the hog frame with the curtain formed a niche which made an excellent hiding place.

Of course it would not avail at all in case the cabin should be searched, but so long as the men did not suspect that the fugitive was hiding there in that particular place, he was perfectly safe in the aperture behind the curtain.

And that is where he had withdrawn, when, not a full second after he passed by Swipes, who was stretched on the floor, that individual opened his eyes, yawned, and sat up—and at the same instant Witherspoon, Kelly, Hans, and half a dozen others came rushing back into the cabin.

"Where is he? Did he come back in here, Swipes?" demanded Witherspoon.

"Come back nothin'! Nobody's come back here but you fellers, and you are about the ones I want to see, I think. I've been struck in the jaw just exactly once too often by Bob Kelly, and now, as he is here, he can take that!"

With the utterance of the last sentence, which he shouted in a loud tone, Swipes pulled his revolver with a motion that was as quick as a cat's, and sent a bullet through Bob Kelly's heart, killing him dead; and after he had fired the shot, he stood back with the weapon in his hand raised for instant use, smiling grimly through the swollen and discolored visage he wore.

For a moment after the firing of the shot and the death of Kelly, there was a dead silence, during which Swipes stood with the smoking pistol in his hand, waiting for the next move, calm, determined, deadly.

And the next move came, swiftly and surely.

Witherspoon and Kelly were old pals—they were more than that, for they were genuine friends, and Witherspoon disliked Swipes almost as much as he loved Kelly.

There are as strong affections as there are hatreds among thieves, as this episode of the killing of Kelly was about to prove.

It seemed at first as if Witherspoon did not realize that his friend had been murdered before his eyes, and then it came upon him with a rush.

With an oath he started to raise the weapon that he already had in his hand, but Swipes saw the motion and fired again, this time at Witherspoon.

The bullet hit him in the stomach, and he pitched forward against the table; but he was game, and, as he fell, he seized the table with his left hand to steady himself, while his right hand pulled the trigger of his ever-ready revolver.

The two shots followed each other so quickly that there was scarcely a perceptible stop between them, and both men rolled to the floor together, for Witherspoon's bullet had also gone home, true to its aim, and Swipes never drew another breath after it struck him.

The three shots were fired and the three men tumbled

to the floor almost like the counting of one, two, three, so rapidly did events follow each other, and instantly all was commotion everywhere on the ship.

Hans, who had seen his pet boy, Swipes, shot through the heart, raised his gun and fired at the man who had killed him, although that man was already on the floor struggling with his death wound.

But the bullet from Hans' revolver pierced his brain, and then as Hans bent over the body of Swipes to discover if he were indeed dead, there was another sharp report behind him, and he fell over upon the other bodies.

But Hans seemed to bear a charmed life, for he was not dead—not even seriously wounded. The bullet that felled him merely grazed his temple, producing unconsciousness; but it was unconsciousness that looked so exactly like death, and his face was so suffused with blood, that the man who shot him was deceived.

By this time the cabin was in a state of pandemonium. Nobody knew what had happened, or why anything had happened at all.

On the floor of the cabin, piled almost one upon another, were the bodies of Kelly, Swipes, Witherspoon, and Hans Pretzel, and around them, their faces blanched with fear, were grouped every man of that portion of the criminal troupe, even to those who had been upon guard on the deck, looking down upon the four men whom they had regarded as their leaders.

Not one of them understood it. Nobody could explain how it had all happened.

Swipes had killed Kelly because Kelly had struck him; Witherspoon had killed Swipes because Swipes had killed Kelly; Hans had put the finishing touches upon the death of Witherspoon because Witherspoon had shot Swipes, and somebody—nobody seemed to know who—had shot Hans.

They stood staring at each other in speechless amazement, as well as in terror. Nick Carter and everything connected with him was forgotten. If any one of them thought of him at all in that moment, it was to mutter to himself, "let him go to blazes if he wants to, for I am going to get out of here."

It seemed to be as if with one accord that they returned their weapons to their pockets and then looked from face to face around the cabin in search of somebody who would suggest how they should act in this extremity; and presently one of them leaned one hand on the table, and after wiping his brow wearily, said:

"I don't know how you feel about it, pals, but this looks to me like the end of our society stunt, don't it? We ain't got any leader left, not even if we want one. Cracka-jack's gone, Bob's gone, Swipes is gone—there don't seem to be anybody left but us, and I'm for giving the thing up and lighting out of this for good and all. I ain't much to home on a steamboat, anyhow; and besides, there ain't much doubt that that chap what was here was either Nick Carter or somebody that was sent by him, and which ever way that may be, it won't be healthy for us to go into criminal trusts while he is on to the game. I'm for moseying; who's with me?"

"I am," replied one.

"And I," repeated another; and he was followed by a chorus of I's which extended down the line until every man there had responded.

"Well, let's get out of this instanter," continued the

first speaker. "This steamboat business ain't healthy. Let's go now."

"Hold on, there," interrupted a voice. "Look here, Miggs, you don't suppose that we can all get away from this here boat together without being pinched, do you?"

"No. I suppose not."

"Well, I should say nit. We've got to go two at a time."

"Then who will go first?"

"We'll draw lots for that."

"That's agreed."

"I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll cut up a lot of slips of paper and then I'll number 'em from one up, for every guy that's here, and then we'll draw 'em out of my hat. Each man'll leave the ship accordin' to his number. Is that agreed?"

"Agreed."

"Well, now, Miggs, while I'm fixin' the papers, suppose you and one or two others mosey up on deck and take a look around, just to see if all that shootin'-attracted any attention. It made considerable noise, and I shouldn't wonder if—"

He ceased speaking suddenly and his jaw dropped.

The others, who were watching him while he was talking, saw that his eyes were fixed upon something behind them, and they turned as with one accord toward the stairs of the companionway.

As they did so, a stern, commanding voice snapped upon their ears like the clang of steel against steel, and they started back simultaneously in obedience to that command.

"Hands up!" ordered the voice, and their hands went up like one.

A solitary individual was standing on the third stair, facing them.

Both his arms were extended toward them, and in each hand he held a big revolver, the muzzles of which kept moving unsteadily in a circular motion, so that one after another, one of the weapons was aimed at the spot on each man there nearest to his heart.

And the muzzles kept moving so continuously and so sinuously, that there was never an instant when any one of those men was sure that his own heart was not the direct target, if the weapon of either of them should happen to be discharged.

The man himself seemed to be a total stranger—one whom they had not seen before. He was bare-headed, and wore a heavy shock of very black hair, a black mustache and imperial, and bristling, beetling eyebrows.

"I've got the drop on yezz, me byes," he said, grinning broadly, "and there's two boatloads of me friends outside, waitin' f'r me to repor-r-t. I'm goin' to step back outside, now, on the deck, and whin yez git t'rough drawin' lots, faith yez kin put yer pishtils and guns through the skylight there, onto the deck. Thin, whin ye have all done that, me friends and me'll let ye out wan by wan, and ax ye some questions. Do ye moind that?"

"Sure," he continued, when there was no reply, "it seems that there's four did min on the flure, but mebbey they kilt aich other and yez are not guilty. Anyhow, yezz will have a chance to prove it—the chance av yer loifeime, sure."

"Now, byes," the stranger continued, "if ye want us to be real good to ye, put yer guns through the skylight, and then come out wan at a time as I call ye, for if ye

come more than wan at a time, somebody'll git hurt, and it won't be me or any av me own frinds—bet yer loife on that."

With a quick motion the speaker stepped back out of sight through the door, and they could hear a key turn in the lock on the other side.

But they could not see through the door.

If they could have done that, they would have discovered something that would have surprised and astonished them, for the supposed Irishman pulled the black wig from his head and scratched his head thoughtfully while he waited for those inside to obey his orders about the pistols.

CHAPTER XI.

TRUMPS.

"Aces were trumps that time, sure enough," said Nick, speaking to himself, for it was the detective, who during the excitement had crept out of his hiding place, hurried to the deck, and utilized the wig and the other things that he carried in his pocket.

He knew that the men were so utterly demoralized that it would be an easy matter to control them now; and moreover, he banked upon another thing which only a thorough knowledge of criminals could have suggested to him.

There were three dead men on the floor of the cabin, and one who was not dead, Nick knew that. Not one of the men who were living, save Hans, who was unconscious, was responsible for a single one of these deaths.

Criminals and thieves—in fact all kinds of crooks—never enter upon an undertaking without considering the cost. They know to almost a day just what amount of imprisonment they may expect for each crime they are caught in committing—and then inevitably figure upon that and no more.

Not one of these men wanted to be sent up for murder, and as not one of them had committed a murder, they were not going to take any chances toward getting mixed up with another killing.

The detective knew that every man there would sooner surrender peaceably and take his chances at a year or two in prison, than to run the chances he would have to, if he made a break for escape, and, moreover—and here was the vital point—if they should make a break—and two or three of them should succeed in escaping, the others who remained would not hesitate to attribute the murders to them in order to save their own necks.

A thief is always a coward. He may at times put up a splendid bluff at bravery, but at heart he is a coward, and on principle he is always treacherous.

It is safe to say that not one of them would have made a break for liberty at that moment when Nick stepped back through the cabin door and locked it, even had he known that he could make good his escape, for the reason that he would know equally well that if he did get away, those whom he left behind him would accuse him of the murders, every one of them, and thus deliberately swear his life away in order to save themselves from the electric chair.

When Nick locked the cabin door, he hurried upon the deck, and hastening to the bow of the vessel he made hurried signals to a tug that was passing at some distance away.

He soon had the satisfaction of seeing that his signals were seen, and presently the tug drew alongside of the steamer.

A few words sufficed to explain the situation, and the tug steamed with all speed toward the shore for a reinforcement of policemen, while Nick returned to his stand near the cabin door to watch the skylight.

As he had expected, there were already several revolvers lying upon the deck where the men inside the cabin had thrust them through the broken panes; and these were rapidly followed by more.

And later, when he could count as many as he thought there should be, a voice on the other side of the door proclaimed that they were unarmed and ready.

The detective was also ready, for at that moment the tug reappeared, a dozen armed policemen were soon on the deck, and the cabin door was opened.

As the men filed out of the cabin, one by one, they were taken in charge by the officers, and conveyed to the tug—and then, at the last, staggering as he walked, came Hans.

He walked with his head down until he came to where Nick was standing—for the detective had removed the wig and other things which disguised him for the moment—he came to a full stop. His face was covered with clotted blood, but he seemed as vigorous as ever.

"Vell, Nicky," he said slowly, "you vin; hey?"

"You bet," replied Nick. "My little aces were trumps, all right, Hans."

"Sure. Dem kinds of aces always iss. But, Nicky, you didn't fool your Uncle Hans, at that, did you? Hey, vat?"

"No."

"Vell, you chust look ound, 'cos mebbey Hans Pretzel vill lif long enough to fool you yet, already."

THE END.

Next week's issue of this weekly, No. 59, out October 25th, will contain "The Gambler's Last Hand; or, The Little Giant Wins Out."

This is an absorbing story of apparently a double identity. It tells how Nick Carter disguised himself as a dead man, how one of his assistants disguised himself as his brother, how they both entered a dive unknown to each other, and how Hans Pretzel put up his last fight.

HOW MUTES MAKE LOVE.

A gentleman who enjoys a wide acquaintance among the deaf, writes that the courtship of a pair of mutes is one of the most singular things on record.

"I know a young man who is now deep in the toils of a fair and speechless girl," he said, "and he has taken me into his confidence. He is perfectly happy in his infirmity, for from conversation he has held with ordinary lovers he has come to the conclusion that silence is, after all, the best form for lovers.

"During the progress of his love he experienced but one difficulty, and that in a short time he surmounted. The thorn that lay in his bed of roses was a gas jet, which, as he, of course, conversed with his adored one in the sign language, it was always necessary to keep ablaze—a woefully embarrassing thing for lovers.

"Finally they discovered that they could utilize the sense

of touch in deciphering their sign language. By holding one another's hands they found that they could carry on a conversation with tolerable facility, and in about a week were adepts. Thus deaf, dumb, and practically blind, they enjoyed all the pleasure of love. They have spread their discovery among their friends, and I believe that the idea has taken fast hold upon deaf lovers."

FOUND GUILTY;

Or, Steve Manley Against Court and Jury.

By ALDEN F. BRADSHAW.

CHAPTER VI.

STEVE PUTS HIS THEORY ON PAPER.

With the bundle of bloodstained bandages under his arm, Steve gazed helplessly across the courtroom after the inquest was ended, until Doctor Gaylord was led out by the way he had come. Then the crowd began to surge toward the corridors and stairways, and Steve was borne along with the others like a chip with the tide.

"Look out, dere, hang you! What's der matter wid your glims? Can't you see I have got a bad duke?"

Hoarse, bitter, and resentful, the remonstrance broke from a ruffian who was being jostled by the crowd and vainly striving to protect from injury the thickly bandaged hand he still was carrying in a sling.

The voice reached Steve's ears, and the mere sound of it, and the glimpse he got of the hard, desperate face among those of the pushing crowd, were enough to revive the courage of the young detective, and renew that determination which briefly had been shaken by the physician's confession.

"That man Rohan again!" was the thought that flashed through his mind. "There must be something in my theory, or that fellow would not constantly be turning up with an interest in this case.

"By the great horn spoon, I'll not let go of my idea, despite Doctor Gaylord's confession. I will see if I can get word with him, and then I'll make my report to Chief O'Mara. Either I am a lunkhead, or I now have got a report worth making. And I'll make it, too, even if I get the laugh for my pains."

As if in encouragement of his renewed determination, success crowned Steve's immediate attempt to see Doctor Gaylord. He found one of the detectives from headquarters, by whom Steve was known, and he influenced one of the court officers to procure him a brief interview with the physician, who then was waiting in a side room before his removal to the prison.

Doctor Gaylord smiled faintly, on seeing him, and kindly held out his hand.

"Good morning, Steve," he said gravely. "What are you doing here?"

"I'd like to whisper a word or two with you, doctor, if I may," Steve softly explained.

The physician at once drew aside from the persons with whom he had been talking, among whom were Celia Waldon and her father, the latter now so humiliated and remorseful that his enmity for the physician was entirely overcome.

"Have you called to say good-by to me, Steve?" smiled Doctor Gaylord, when they were alone.

"No, sir, not that," Steve softly exclaimed, shaking his head. "But I think you've made a mistake, sir."

"No, Steve, I guess not. Under the circumstances a confession was best, though many urged me to the contrary."

"But I don't mean that, sir, either," whispered Steve, with nervous eagerness. "I say, doctor, would you mind telling me if it was very dark that night?"

"Do you mean when I encountered Paul Henry?"

"Yes, sir, that's what I mean."

"Yes, Steve, it was quite dark. We were under the trees near the Trust Building."

"Was it so dark you couldn't see the man's face, doctor?"

"Well, not plainly, Steve, surely," replied Doctor Gaylord.

"Were you dead sure it was Henry, sir, when you struck him, and when you looked and found him knocked out?"

An expression of grave surprise had risen over Doctor Gaylord's pale face.

"Good heavens, Steve, why do you ask me this?" he said softly. "There can be no doubt of the identity of the man. No, I cannot say that I was positively certain at the time of the encounter, for I was much excited, yet the man certainly must have been Paul Henry. You know I returned only an hour or two later, and found him lying just where I had left him. I recognized him then, Steve, and I am satisfied that he was the man I encountered earlier."

"Mebbe you're right, Doctor Gaylord," admitted Steve.

But all the while he doubted it.

"I guess there is no question about it, Steve," rejoined the physician.

"Still, I'd like it if you would say nothing about my having asked you these questions."

"Very well, Steve; I will say nothing about it."

Though he smiled gravely and again shook Steve by the hand, he did not dream of what was actuating the latter, nor of the remarkably clever work he was doing in his behalf.

Having learned what he wished, Steve next hastened to the police headquarters and the office of Chief O'Mara.

There he met with a disappointment.

Chief O'Mara had left town immediately after the inquest, and was not expected to return before evening.

"That means no report to him before to-morrow morning," groaned Steve. "Meantime, those two duffers may make their escape, and— No, I'm blessed if they shall! At least, not before I have had out my little round with them!

"I'll leave Chief O'Mara my report on paper, and then I'll continue the work on my own hook."

Having deposited his bundle in a corner of the chief's office, Steve hastened to procure a sheet of paper, and at one of the inspector's desks in the general officers' room he made out the following report:

"May 13th, 12:30 p. m.

"Official Report of Detective Stephen Manley.

"TO CHIEF ROGER O'MARA: There are two bad men, one named Rohan, the other named Dumfrie, down in the Boyd House, on V— Street. I have been shadowing both of them since yesterday, and now am going down

there in disguise to see if I can discover what their little game has been.

"Both of these men were in Paul Henry's residence either on the night of the murder or the night before, and their actions are very suspicious. They were hanging about outside of the fence when Henry's body was found, and Rohan questioned me as to what you had discovered. When I left them that morning, I heard Rohan say to the other: 'That's what comes of a crooked duffer giving a square gun the chilly mit.'

"I shadowed both men to the Boyd House, where they now are located. Rohan's left hand evidently is badly injured, and he carries it in a sling. In the range in Henry's kitchen I found a lot of bloodstained bandages which he had removed from his hand, and he stole half of a sheet from one of Henry's beds with which to make new ones. You'll find the other half of the sheet, also the soiled bandages, in the bundle which I have left in your office. If you will have the man arrested, and compare the portion of sheet with the sling and bandages he now is wearing, you will find that I am right.

"I think Doctor Gaylord has made a blunder, and invited his own arrest by it. I think he struck some other man, most likely Dobbs, who now is mysteriously missing. You will remember that Dobbs was the watchman that night, and next morning that he had his neck muffled up, as if injured. He now is missing, and I think he has got a bat in his belfry, which is quite empty when it's at its best.

"I don't know yet what game Henry may have been up to with these two ruffians, Rohan and Dumfrie, but I now am going to find out. They are two very tough characters. Should they discover my intentions and do me up, Chief O'Mara, will you please see that they get all that's coming to them for it. Respectfully submitted,

"DETECTIVE STEPHEN MANLEY."

This was Steve's first attempt at making an official report, and it was written in much haste and excitement; hence its failings may be overlooked.

Having sealed it in an envelope, he addressed it to Chief O'Mara and left it on the latter's desk.

CHAPTER VII.

STEVE TAKES A LONG CHANCE.

A man by the name of Maguire ran the Boyd House, and the most profitable part of it, in fact the only part that warranted its existence at all was its bar and lunch tables. From this combination, which occupied nearly the entire street floor, Maguire derived the means for a much better living than he enjoyed. Yet the upper floors of the miserable resort boasted of a few ill-kept rooms, usually rented to one or more equally miserable tenants.

It had the reputation of not only being a dive, but also a favorite retreat of fugitives from the law, and after the early hours of any evening one would have had to seek far and wide for a more noisy and desperate gang than that which haunted Maguire's place on the river front.

An hour or more after Steve left his official report on Chief O'Mara's desk, Maguire gazed over his bar at a shabby youngster who had just entered, and whose aspect, walk, and general characteristics were decidedly those of a youthful vagabond of the city type.

"I say, Maguire, would yer give a feller a job?" he asked, with a voice and slang which spoke well for Steve's cleverness as a personator.

"I've been slingin' beer for Leary down on the point for a week back, while his son Jim was on his booze," Steve quickly added, before a refusal could be made. "But I'm t'rowed out, now Jim's back, and I'm on me uppers. I'll work for nuthin'; only a bite to eat and a corner to sleep in after closing. What d'ye say, Mr. Maguire? Will ye gimme a try?"

As it fortunately happened, Mr. Maguire was at that very time in need of help to serve his table trade in the busy hours, and Steve's offer was by far too good to be unworthy his consideration.

"Was ye working for Leary, did ye say?" he demanded, thrusting his red head over the bar to peer at Steve more closely.

"Sure I was, Mr. Maguire. All last week.

"That was yer doing?"

"Slingin' beer most of the time, and waiting on the push."

"Be yer good around the tables?"

"That's me best holt, sir. I'm quick, and I'm not afear'd of work."

"Bedad, I'll give yer a try!" cried Maguire approvingly.

This was all that Steve wanted, and he was more than clever enough to hold such a job after getting it.

Evening found him busily engaged between the bar and the dozen or more tables which the low resort afforded, and displaying an activity, and interest which led Maguire to think that he had indeed made a lucky find.

Before the evening rush of trade began, however, Steve had found an opportunity to take another step in the design then engaging him. While Maguire was at his supper, the young detective had stolen out by the rear door of the long barroom, and, after climbing two flights of uncarpeted stairs, he had succeeded in locating the room then rented by the two ruffians.

It was a dismal back-room, containing a single wide bed, a couple of chairs, and a bureau. The window looked out upon a narrow rear court, with the pavements fully forty feet below.

Up to that time he had seen neither of the ruffians about the house nor in the barroom, but by a little artful questioning he had learned from Maguire that they had gone out upon the street only a short time before, and that they had engaged their room with him for a week.

Finding the door of the room unlocked, Steve ventured to enter and look the place over, with a view of his subsequent requirements.

"If I can scare them into a game of talk," he shrewdly reasoned, "I may be able to get the information I am after. It is worth a try, at all events; and if they show signs of lighting out after I alarm them, I easily can make sure of their arrest."

It was nearly nine o'clock before Rohan and his companion returned to the house, and they took seats at one of the tables in the barroom, and ordered two glasses of beer and something to eat. Neither saw in Steve Manley any likeness to the youth Rohan had accosted on the morning following the murder, and Steve waited until they had finished eating and had ordered another round of drinks, before he got down to work.

He took a time when the business eased up a trifle,

and when the noisy demands of those at the tables were well supplied. Then he stepped back of the chair in which Rohan had seated opposite his companion, and bent over to wipe off the bare table, and said softly in the ruffian's ear, as if giving him a friendly warning:

"Say, boss, you two guns better keep under cover for a time!"

Dumfrie did not hear what had been said to Rohan, but the latter started as if stung. He turned, with an ugly frown, to look at Steve, and seemed to read in his significant expression that only a friendly service was intended, and his own grim face relaxed a trifle.

"What d'yer mean, kid?" he growled, scarce above his breath.

Steve warningly shook his head, and kept on wiping the table.

"I dunno what your graft is," he replied, in a whisper, "but two o' the fly coppers from headquarters were in here just before dark, and hung around for an hour."

"To-night?"

"Not more'n an hour ago," nodded Steve. "They boozed up at the next table, and I caught onto 'em through hearing what they said."

"What's all this about?" Dumfrie suspiciously demanded, now leaning over the table.

"Shut up!" growled Rohan, with a furious scowl. "What did yer hear 'em say, kid?"

"As how they were looking for a gun with a bad hand, him and another one. Seeing you with your duke tied up, and only his jags with you, I thought mebbe 'twas you they wanted, and I'd tip yer off to lay low in case I was right."

Steve not only looked the part he was playing, but he was also carrying it with such skill that both of the ruffians, who now were deeply interested, were without a suspicion of his duplicity.

"Are yer sure they was detectives, kid?" demanded Dumfrie, who appeared the more disturbed of the two.

"Do yer think I'm a chump?" asked Steve, with a sneer of disdain. "Of course they was detectives. I knowed one o' 'em by sight, as far as that goes, and the game of talk they were putting up on the quiet showed plain enough what they were."

"Was you waiting on 'em?" growled Rohan, over whose grim face a more desperate look had been steadily rising.

"Sure I was waiting on 'em," nodded Steve. "That's how I twigged what they were saying."

"They're not about here now, are they?"

"Not for an hour or more."

"Did they ask yer any questions?"

"If they had, 'twould been a waste of time and breath," said Steve significantly. "I'd not have given 'em a pointer on their lives, for I don't love 'em enough for that. But they didn't ask me nuthin', nor the boss, for I kept me lamps on 'em from the start."

"What did yer hear 'em say, kid?"

"As to how they were after two coveys for some kind of a job I couldn't quite get onto."

"What was they shooting off the yarn in here for?"

"They just met outside, d'ye see, and one of 'em was telling the other what his lay was. But I couldn't get it all."

"Tell what yer got," growled Rohan impatiently.

"Him as did the talk said as how he wanted the two guns for a job up in a crib on Bellefield Avenue."

"For cracking der joint?"

"He didn't say de crib had been cracked, but as how the two coveys was known to be there two or three nights ago. I piped him as close as I dared, d'ye see?"

"Did he say whose house?" demanded Rohan.

"I wa'n't quite sure, but I reckoned 'twas the bloke's house who had his light put out up that way by some doctor, who slugged him under the ear," explained Steve, imitating, as well as he was able, the low vernacular of the desperado to whom he was talking.

That Dumfrie was seriously alarmed was plainly manifest, and even Rohan, who was by far the more hardened and desperate man of the two, was considerably disturbed. He sat with his injured hand hugged close to his broad chest, and his right fist fiercely clenched upon the table, and only for a moment now and then did his sullen eyes leave Steve's face, when, moved by that impulse which predominates in a hunted man, he glanced out over the gathering of rough fellows by which the deep barroom was thronged.

With voice lowered, and with a caution which at once betrayed to Steve the gravity of his apprehensions, Rohan next demanded:

"How'd the fly coppers know de two guns were in the house?"

"I heard 'em say they found some bloody rags in one of the stoves."

"I told you them wouldn't burn, and you'd better watch 'em," put in Dumfrie, glaring with evident disgust at his confederate. "Now, it's money to marbles you've queered the whole business, and brought the cops upon our heels."

With a frown that would baffle description, Rohan leaped across the table and shook his clenched hand in the speaker's face.

"You keep your trap closed, do yer hear?" he said, in tones that were shaken through and through with intense passion. "I am doing the talking with this kid, and you keep out of it. Don't you tell me I've brought the coppers on yer, or I'll put yer out in a way that will keep yer still."

"I was only thinking we'd best make a quick sneak while we can," growled Dumfrie, humbled by the other's ferocity.

"You can think as much as you like, but don't think out loud," retorted Rohan, reverting to Steve.

"D'ye know, kid, if the coppers knew we wuz here?"

"I reckon they didn't," replied Steve. "They were only on a lay to find you, and I thought I'd tip you off."

"I'll not forget it. Did they say if they found anything else?"

"I heard 'em say something about a sheet stole off a bed," continued Steve, "the which had been torn up, and only a part of it left in a closet. That's about all I heard, pard, and I think that's about all they knew."

"Do ye know where my room is?" asked the ruffian.

"I can find out," answered Steve quickly.

"It's on the second floor back, nigh the corner."

"I know, now."

"And if these two elbows show up again, I want you to come on the quiet and tell me."

"I'll do that, only you mustn't give me away if you get pinched."

"Do I look like a gun as would give a pal away?" demanded Rohan, going down into his pocket.

Then he drew out several pieces of silver and thrust them into Steve's hand, and the latter nodded significantly and said:

"You can count on me. I'll keep my eyes open, and if the duffers show up in here again I'll let you know."

Rohan nodded approvingly, and leaned over the table to whisper for several minutes to his companion, upon which it became very evident that a serious dissension was arising between them.

Steve took the opportunity to move away, and, a moment later, he was hanging about the rear door of the noisy room. Watching for a chance when no one should observe his movements, he suddenly slipped into the back entry and darted up the stairs.

He fully realized the terribly desperate character of these men against whom he was working, and that, if his treachery was discovered, his life would be worth scarce a pin's fee, yet he did not for a moment shrink from the danger, nor from executing the design he shrewdly had planned.

Making sure that he was not observed in either of the dimly lighted entries, he hurried up the two flights of stairs and entered the back room.

It then was as dark as a negro's pocket, but Steve already had looked the place over and shaped his course.

The room offered no concealment but, a closet, and beneath the bed, and Steve chose that which seemed to him the least hazardous.

Dropping upon his hands and knees, he crept under the bed, which was pushed close against the wall on one side, and stretched himself flat upon the floor.

Lying there with breathing hushed, and with his heart throbbing so hard against his ribs that it quite alarmed him, Steve awaited the approach of the two ruffians, whom he knew would soon seek their room for a discussion of their situation.

It was by this daring and desperate strategy that the young detective aimed to secure a complete case against them.

Men of years and experience, even, would have shrunk from what Steve Manley's courageous ambition had dared.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN PERIL OF HIS LIFE.

Steve was not obliged to wait very long for the culmination of his design, which was all the more to his fancy under the existing circumstances.

At the end of five minutes the sound of heavy feet were heard ascending the stairs, and the door of the room was presently kicked open by a heavy boot, and the grim and sullen growl of Mr. Rohan broke the dismal silence.

"Strike a light!" he commanded, with an oath. "Strike a light, and then I'll settle this business with yer for good and all. You've got no sand, Waddy. You give me a pain in the side. Strike a light, I say!"

"He wouldn't do a thing to me if he found me here!" said Steve to himself, quite alarmed for a moment by the furious ill humor displayed by Rohan. "It would be a case of all up with Steve Manley."

Dumfrie had some difficulty in finding a match in his dilapidated pocket, but after several minutes, which were

enlivened by the unceasing maledictions of Rohan, he succeeded in locating the desired article, and presently the feeble rays of a smoky oil lamp were shed upon the scene.

"Shut the door!" cried Rohan, throwing himself into a chair near the wall. "Shut the door, an' listen to me."

"Ain't I listening?" retorted Dumfrie, with a growl of resentment. "Don't you think you can give me a bluff with yer ugly tongue, for I'm not afeared of any man with only a single duke. I'm not crying baby, but I want to do the thing what's best to be done. And a quick sneak is the safest, I say, if what that kid told you was the trut'."

"Der trut'!" growled Rohan, glaring scornfully at his confederate. "What else could it be but der trut'? How could that kid have known anything about our being in the house of that infernal crooked duffer, and about der rags I shoved in the stove, only if some o' the coppers were here as he said. Of course 'twas der trut'!"

"And what der ye mean to do about it? Are yer going to stay here and be took like a rat in a trap?" Dumfrie sullenly demanded.

"We're a long ways from being took," retorted Rohan, with a contemptuous sneer. "The coppers ain't onto it that we are here; and, if they was, and were to run us in, they'd have no case against us fur being in a man's house after the man took us in there."

"Ain't we both mugged in the picture gallery?" cried Dumfrie, with augmented bitterness.

"What if we are?"

"Wouldn't they get on to that? And how long before they'd know that we are the two that broke jail in Cleveland, when you got the bullet in your duke?"

"That's the chance we must both of us take," replied Rohan bluntly. "And it's a better chance than sneaking away from here, and giving 'em reason to pull us up on der road, like as if we had been up to something crooked and were trying to give 'em the slip."

"I'm not so dead sure o' that, Bill."

"Well, I am! It's a blamed sight better fur me to go back to Cleveland and do out my time there than to be run in here in Pennville fur puttin' out the light o' the crooked duffer who throwed us down."

"That does settle it!" Steve exultantly cried within himself. "I've had the case dead to rights, after all, and that was the man who killed Henry."

"But you're taking the chance of their putting the crime on you by staying here," growled Dumfrie, by no means convinced by Rohan's sullen argument.

"How can they put it on me, you fool, since der saw-bones has confessed to doing der job?" demanded Rohan contemptuously. "The evidence is all against him, not against me."

But Mr. Dumfrie dismally shook his head.

"They have ways o' doing things, Bill, and mighty queer ways," said he; "the which we guns don't know much about."

"But they can't do it!"

"It's easy enough to say they can't, but still I say they might!"

"You're turning yaller ag'in!" cried Rohan, with another outburst of resentful disdain. "How could they show dat we came here like total strangers, and run across that duffer all by accident?"

"Still. I say they might show it."

"And they might not! I'm taking that chance sooner'n take a worse one. An' how can they show that the duffer took us to his own house, and kept us hid fur two days and nights, so's we could help him in his little game? They can't show that, since the duffer's dead."

"I don't say they can show it, Bill," Dumfrie now growled impatiently. "I'm only saying they might be able to show it—an' you know well enough what that means!"

"You're afeared of a shadow."

"No, I'm not."

"Yer don't see the case in the right light. They'd have to show a motive fur the crime, an' how 'twas done; and they can't do that. How can they show that the duffer let us into the bank by the side door that night, for us to knock him out and put him to sleep, as if der job was a square deal and the crib had been decently cracked? How can they show all that?"

"They're sure to find he was short in the accounts he was keeping," snarled Dumfrie discursively; "and that will give 'em a pointer as to the motive, if not the whole blooming game."

"You are very right, it will!" thought Steve triumphantly.

"But they can't show that we were there," protested Rohan, maintaining his argument with all the ugly persistency of a man convinced of its stability.

"They can't show that the old crooked duffer went back on us, and turned us down when he found he had a chance to fix himself up by marrying der banker's daughter!" he continued forcibly.

"Mebbe they can't show that, Bill; but the case is bad, infernally bad, at the best I can see it."

"And they can't show," persisted Rohan, "that I slugged him in a way to put out his light, when I found he'd given us der chilly mit, and locked der vault door so's we couldn't do der job on our own hook, since we was in there so easy."

"They can't show any o' that, d'ye see; nor how we lugged der cussed stiff out by der side door an' left it on the ground, so's there'd be no evidence of its having been done inside. They can't show any of it, Waddy, when it comes down to der fine thing; and der confession of der sawbones will be more'n enough to clear us of having any hand in der duffer's death. That ought to be plain enough to you, Waddy."

It was equally plain that Bill Rohan was very much averse to being deserted at just this time by his confederate in the crime which he had just elucidated in his uncouth fashion, and that he was making this sustained argument chiefly with a hope of preventing the threatened rupture of their relations.

But again Waddy Dumfrie doubtfully shook his head.

"You may be right about it, Bill," he said grimly, "but I'm cursed if I can see it in the same way that you do. If you hadn't put out der bloke's light—"

"What's der use of saying if?" Rohan furiously interrupted. "Meet der thing as she is, not as she might 'a' been! What der yer mean to do?"

"I say the best thing is a quick sneak, while we can get away," repeated Dumfrie, still clinging to the opinion he had formed the moment he discovered the danger of remaining in Pennville.

This response, which was directly opposed to his own wishes, only served to anger Rohan the more.

"Then you mean to give me der chilly mit, the same as the other duffer did, do you?" he demanded, with an ominous suppression of passion.

"No, I'm not giving you any frozen hand," was the quick retort. "There ain't any rope on you, and you can come along with me, so be it you like."

"Yer face shows you don't want me!" cried Rohan, with his steadfast eyes flaming brighter and brighter, and never leaving those of the man opposite.

"You're wrong in that!"

"No, by thunder, I'm right! It sounds in your voice, and I know how you feel. You think I'm like to be turned down fur this job, and you fear that you'll be taken along with me."

"We'll both be taken, Bill, if we stay here."

"And you mean to quit me and try to make off alone, that's what you mean!" cried Rohan, suddenly starting to his feet and striding nearer his hearer. "You're a dirty duffer, and I'll not stand for it. The next I know, you'll be on a lay to turn me down, and clear yourself by splitting the whole business."

With an uglier look in his eyes under this accusation, Dumfrie leaped up and started for the door.

But Rohan was too quick for him, and with a bound he had thrust the man back, and stood with his broad shoulders against the closed door, and his powerful figure preventing the other's egress.

Steve decided that the affair was becoming deucedly warm.

But it then was cool and comfortable compared with the conditions a moment later.

With his flaming eyes fixed on the angry face of the man he now confronted, Rohan furiously demanded between his set teeth:

"D'ye mean that you're going?"

"Aye, that's what I mean!" cried Dumfrie firmly.

"Will yer go without me?"

"You can do as you like, Rohan, but I'm going! Pennville is now too warm for me."

"D'ye mean—"

"I mean what I say!" cried Dumfrie, with an outburst of anger which till then had been contained. "I mean what I say! I'm going!"

"And you'll give me der shake, eh? When I'm—"

"You can take it that way, or anyway you like, if—"

"Take that, instead, you duffer!"

And with a rage he no longer held in check, Rohan suddenly sprang forward and dealt his confederate a blow that lifted him clear of the floor and sent him crashing bodily upon the bed behind him.

His fall was accompanied by the loud snapping and cracking of breaking slats. The bedstead yielded under the ruffian's weight, and the mattress, bedding, and man came down in indescribable confusion fairly upon the figure of the startled and dismayed youth beneath them.

Instantly a cry, not of resentment of the blow, but of sudden and overwhelming amazement, broke from Dumfrie's lips.

Before Rohan could repeat the blow, which in his rage he seemed about to do, the fallen ruffian scrambled out of the confusion, crying hoarsely:

"Let up! let up, Bill; slit my gizzard, if there isn't a man under the bed!"

"What der yer say?"

"Under the bed—there's a man under the bed!"

"Lift it up, then!" cried Rohan furiously. "Can't yer see I've only got one hand?"

"One was enough!" retorted Dumfrie, violently throwing off the mattress and bedding. "You see I was right. We're already run down—oh, devil's luck! It's that kid!"

"Shut up! See if anybody is in the entry! Don't you tumble? Der kid is working wid der coppers! See if any one's in der entry!"

The face of the ruffian had undergone a mighty change. He instantly grasped the significance of Steve's presence there; and, in place of rage, his desperate face now evinced a vengefulness and resolution sufficient to have appalled the stoutest heart that ever beat in a detective's breast.

"Come out here!" he hissed, as soon as Dumfrie had reclosed the door. "Come out, I say!"

Without a word, Steve crawled from under the broken slats, and took a position on the floor.

"Look out for the door, Waddy," growled Rohan. "Don't give him a chance to skip. Now, kid, don't open your mouth till I say! If yer do, I'll close it for keeps."

Steve fell back a step or two from the man, whose very fury was only the more terrible because of its quietude, and paused only when his hips touched the bureau back of him.

But he did not speak. The look on Rohan's face told him, louder even than his words, that his threat would be executed with a celerity that would render vain any outcry he then could make.

With his voice scarce raised above a whisper, Rohan came closer and demanded:

"What were you doing here? Are you working with the coppers?"

"Am I to speak now?" returned Steve, in tones that shook despite him.

"Aye, but in a whisper."

"Yes, I am working with the detectives," admitted Steve, taking his best chance to escape with his life.

The ruffian's face did not change. All the worst part of his nature was already pictured there. He nodded slowly, with his fiery gaze never leaving the boy's face, and said grimly:

"I ought to have known it. So you're a fly young copper, are you?"

"What good to deny it?" returned Steve, pulling himself together to face the music with as bold a front as possible. "Yes, I'm one of Chief O'Mara's force of men."

"Men, eh? D'ye hear that, Waddy?"

"Aye, I hear it. I reckon, now, you'll think it's a case of sneak."

"You're right, Waddy, and I was wrong. See here, kid, what do the other coppers know about this case?"

"They know all about it," said Steve shortly.

He knew that Rohan was aiming to discover just where he should stand in case he should silence him, and Steve was at once shrewd enough to chance escaping with his life by deceiving them.

"If they know all about it, what were you here for?" demanded Rohan sharply.

"To make sure we were right," Steve boldly answered.

"The chief knows all about you, Mr. Rohan, and if you do me up for this, you'll only have the more to answer for."

"The penalty's the same for two as for one!" exclaimed the ruffian, with frightful significance. "And I'd croak

easier, knowing I'd not let a kid like you do me up, unpunished, in a way like this. D'ye hear what he says, Waddy?"

"Sure, I hear!"

"And what do yer say?"

"I say what I said before: It's a case of making a sneak, or we'll be cornered here like rats in a trap."

"Look out again! See who's in the entry."

Mr. Dumfrie softly opened the closed door and peered out into the dimly lighted corridor.

"There's no one in the way, Bill."

"Are yer sure?"

"Dead sure!"

As quick as a flash Bill Rohan swung round and caught Steve by the throat, twining his injured arm around him, and holding him as if in a vise.

Dumfrie instantly suspected the ruffian's intention, and sprang forward, with a cry of alarm.

"Let up, Bill!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "What are you going to do?"

"Get even with this kid before I go! Open der window."

"No, no!"

"By thunder, yes!" cried Rohan, with murder both in eyes and voice. "He heard der whole story when I told it. His testimony alone would convict me. If I toss him from der window that'll end him, and they can't prove he didn't fall out himself. Open der window!"

"Bill—"

But Rohan silenced him with an oath too terrible to inscribe. Despite his struggles, the ruffian raised Steve clear off the floor, and, swinging around to confront his ghastly confederate, he cried once more:

"Open der window! Open it, or I'll throw him through it!"

CHAPTER IX.

A RESCUE.

It was well along in the evening before Chief O'Mara returned to his office at the police headquarters.

On entering the commodious room, one of the first things to meet his gaze was the letter which Steve Manley had left lying upon his desk. Quickly breaking the seal, he opened the folded sheet within and began to read.

The smile which at first appeared around his fine, dark eyes slowly vanished; then, into every feature of his face there gradually stole an expression which pen could not easily describe.

Before he had read the last line his broad experience told him, not the mistakes which Doctor Gaylord and his own detectives had very naturally made, but rather the extraordinary bit of work which the inexperienced writer of the note had accomplished.

He saw at once what Steve had failed to see—that Paul Henry might, indeed, have been short in his accounts, and in league with two ruffians to counterfeited a break and robbery of the Unity Trust that fateful night.

Suddenly throwing the letter down upon his desk, he swung round and hurriedly tore open the bundle which Steve had left lying in one corner.

The moment his stern eyes fell upon its contents, he started to his feet again and hastened toward the door.

"Do up that boy, eh?" he cried, under breath, and with

more emotion than he often displays. "We'll very soon see whether or not they will do him up!"

The inspectors who chanced to be in the outer office looked surprised at the expression on his face when he strode into their midst.

"Two of you come with me!" he cried sharply, indicating with a wave of his hand the two desired. "Don't delay a moment."

Less than ten minutes later a carriage, driven furiously through the streets of Pennville, pulled suddenly up at the curbing in front of the Boyd House, and Chief O'Mara and his officers sprang out.

A sudden, intense silence fell upon the crowded barroom when they entered, and glasses hung poised midway to the lips of startled men.

"Maguire!" cried the chief, striding straight to the bar, "have you a man by the name of Rohan lodging here?"

"Yes, Chief O'Mara, I have!" cried Mr. Maguire, with polite humility.

"Do you know where he is at present?"

"Bedad, sir, I'm thinking he's up in his room."

"Where is his room?"

"Two floors up, sir."

"Front or back?"

"One o' the back rooms, sir, the one nearest the corner."

"I'll go along wid you and show——"

"You stay where you are!"

The tramp, tramp of the officers as they strode through the barroom was the only sound that broke the awed silence.

Their tramp, through the narrow entry and up the dimly lighted stairways, fell more rapidly as they ascended.

On arriving at the break of the last stairway, Chief O'Mara momentarily halted, to ascertain the direction in which to turn.

Even while he stood there, a cry that was hoarse with fury and heavy with vengeful rage sounded from one of the nearest rooms.

"Open the window! Open it, or I'll throw him through it!"

This alone would have been enough to tell where help most was needed. With a single bound, Chief O'Mara reached the room from which the cry had sounded, and, with a single violent blow, he threw open the door.

A startling sight instantly met his gaze.

Waddy Dumfrie stood with both arms stretched wide across the window, to prevent the crime by which Bill Rohan would forever have ended the career of Steve Manley, then hanging choked and nearly senseless in the brutal ruffian's arms.

It would be difficult indeed to fittingly describe what followed, and to depict the various results of the work which Steve Manley so cleverly had done, the amazement of all who heard the extraordinary story, the wonderment even of the court and the police at the strangely curious features of the case, the intense relief and gratitude of Doctor Gaylord and the girl who, like himself, had believed him guilty of a crime of which he was guiltless—to depict these features properly would require more than words alone.

Two days after the publication of the truth through the columns of the press, there turned up at police headquarters, with an explanation to Chief O'Mara, the missing man

in whose silence and absence the mystery of Doctor Gaylord's conduct was involved.

This man was half-witted Peter Dobbs.

In the darkness of that fatal night, recounting the story as he told it, he was dressed in his best, which had led to his being mistaken by the physician, and to his becoming the recipient of a blow which for a time had rendered him insensible. It had resulted from his having encountered Doctor Gaylord at the time of the latter's meeting with Celia Waldon, and in his mistaking them for intruders upon the place, and discourteously ordering them out of the grounds.

On the following day, when Paul Henry was found murdered, Dobbs had assumed that the physician must have encountered Henry; and, upon learning of the physician's arrest, he immediately had fled from the city for fear he should be compelled to testify to having seen him about the Trust Building that night.

Two weeks after the arrest of Rohan and Dumfrie, the former died in his cell of blood poisoning from his wounded hand. Before his death, however, he made a confession which cleared up those features of the case which still remained somewhat obscure.

It appeared that both he and Dumfrie had escaped from prison only a week previous to their meeting with Paul Henry in Pennville. As it afterward appeared, the latter was seriously short in his accounts at the bank, and had employed these two ruffians to counterfeit a robbery in order to conceal the fact of his own defalcation.

It was arranged among them that the two men were to enter the bank by the side door that night, Henry voluntarily admitting them and leaving it to be inferred that Robert Waldon had neglected to lock the door at the time of his departure, a short time before.

Paul Henry, however, had learned only that evening that another avenue of escape from ruin unexpectedly was open for him through the marriage proposed by Waldon; and he had, on the arrival of the ruffians, peremptorily refused to execute the original plan.

This so enraged Rohan that, when Henry started with alarm and succeeded in securing the vault door, the ruffian felled him with a slung shot, giving him the blow that caused his death.

At Dumfrie's suggestion they subsequently had removed the body to the grounds outside, as its discovery there would be less likely to awaken suspicion against men of their profession. They then had locked the side door with Henry's key and replaced the key in the latter's pocket. This occurred, of course, between the time of Doctor Gaylord's encounter with Dobbs and the hour when the physician returned to make his examination of the man he found dead upon the ground. In the meantime, Dobbs had recovered from the blow given him and departed.

By his death Rohan escaped the usual punishment for the crime he had committed; but Dumfries received a life sentence, which he is now serving.

Two months after the release of Doctor Gaylord he was married to Celia Waldon—with her father's consent.

On the morning after his rescue in the Boyd House, Steve Manley told to Chief O'Mara the entire story, as it had appealed to him. The chief heard him to the end, and then gravely observed, yet with a rather quizzical look in his earnest eyes:

"I believe I told you, Steve, that if I found you were not

adapted to detective work your former situation would be open to you."

Steve looked up at him with a most ludicrous expression of dismay.

"Yes, Chief O'Mara, you did," he replied; "but I hope it's not so bad as that, sir!"

"Bad, Steve?" and Chief O'Mara smiled and beckoned for him to come nearer. "No, not bad, Steve!"

Then he laid one hand on the young man's shoulder, and, turning back his coat, he smilingly secured to the lapel of Steve Manley's vest—a detective's badge!

THE END.

THE COWBOY'S LUCKY SHOT.

There was a small Texas settlement in the far Western counties, as they were then called, but now are the ones most thickly settled. The girls of the settlement—three in number—had wandered far out on the prairie to a little strip of woods to gather a few berries, as there were many, and of the finest kind. They had become so excited over their find, and were picking berries so fast, that they did not take in the situation. They were far from the settlement, as they had started early in the morning, and had not found any berries until the middle of the afternoon. The oldest was a girl of about twenty, the other two were from nine to twelve.

All at once there was a savage yell, and six Comanches came in sight on a little knoll on the prairie, almost a quarter of a mile from them. Almost simultaneously a cowboy rode up to them. He was armed with a good rifle and a brace of revolvers. He was a stranger to the girls, and they were apprehensive of his presence, when he told them not to scream, that he was their friend, and would protect them from the Indians, who were advancing, having espied the girls.

The Indians evidently had not noticed the man on his pony, who was partly hidden behind a thicket. As soon as the Indians were near enough, one shot an arrow from his bow at the girls, and all raised a yell. The oldest girl fell wounded, the arrow having passed through her shoulder. She was losing blood, which fact and fright caused her to faint. The other girls ran to her.

Answering the Indians' yell was the report from the cowboy's rifle, and the foremost Indian fell. The other Indians continued to advance, when another shot was heard, and another Indian fell. The Indians stopped and parleyed, and then advanced still nearer. Another shot, and the third Indian fell. The remaining three continued to advance until within a short distance of the girls, when another shot from the thicket prostrated the fourth Indian to rise no more. The other two made a rush for the thicket, as they had discovered where the cowboy had concealed himself.

As they came near he again fired, and one of the two fell, and the other drew his gun, but the cowboy knocked it out of his hand, and knocked the Indian down with his gun. The gun flew out of the cowboy's hand. The Indian leaped to his feet, and they clinched. It was some time before either had the best of the other, but the Comanche could not get his gun, as it was too far away, and the cowboy did not like to let go his hold.

Choosing a favorable opportunity, however, he disengaged one hand, pulled out his dirk, and drove it to the

hilt in the Indian's heart. He now came forward, put the wounded girl on his pony, and told the others to follow him. He tried to pull the arrow from the wound of the girl, but could not without giving her very great pain.

They took the trail for the settlement, which was reached about eight o'clock at night. The arrow was soon extracted by the doctor of the settlement, and the wounded girl was soon out again. The young man bade the young ladies' father good night and left. The father gave him a pressing invitation to return. In a few days he did come back, "just to see how Miss Lucy Look was getting along."

Tom Tubbs, the cowboy, soon became quite a favorite of the Look family. He was a fine fellow and brave. Lucy improved rapidly, and was soon up. She was considered the belle of the settlement. Many of the boys had tried to win her, but failed. Tom, a stranger of another settlement, had fallen in love with Lucy at first sight when he met her at the blackberry patch. He made other short calls after she was well. It was not long before Tom proposed to make Lucy his wife, and Mr. Look, her father, said Tom had fairly won her by saving her from the Comanches.

THE WARM-BLOODED ESKIMO.

Whenever those coldproof nomads of the North find themselves so far away from home that they cannot conveniently reach it before late at night, they build a small snow house—snow kennel would be a better name for it—crawl in and shut the door—which is a block of snow—pull their arms out of the sleeves of their reindeer coats, having previously put the hoods of the coats well round their heads and ears, fold their arms across their bare breasts, with a block of snow under their heads, and go to sleep and snore away, apparently as comfortably as if they were in a first-class hotel. The only time they object to this light and airy system of sleeping out of nights is when a long or hard day's work has created a generous flow of perspiration, and especially in the reindeer stockings. If they be wet from this cause, there is considerable risk to even the warm-blooded Eskimo of getting his toes badly nipped.

TRAINING FOR A RUNNING CONTEST.

When training for a running contest, the athlete must, in the first place, look to his stomach, and see that it is in good condition. If he commences to exercise violently after a period of comparative rest, he is almost sure to upset his digestive organs, and to guard against this should take a mild cathartic. He should begin easily, and work up day by day as his strength and agility increase. Neither should he wear clothing that will produce profuse sweating, that method of reducing flesh having been proved to be decidedly harmful. He should eat plenty of wholesome food, but never indulge in pastry or tobacco in any shape. Having got into good condition, he should decide what distance he proposes to race, and turn his whole attention to it, never striving to become a long and short-distance runner at one and the same time. Two or three trials of speed at 40 or 50-yard distances should be made every day, after getting in fair condition, slowing up gradually each time. Then finish up the day with a run of 150 to 200 yards at three-quarter speed, and so on, day by day, until the stipulated distance is covered at full speed.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Recent Facts You May Not Know.

Five times as many earthquake shocks are recorded on the Pacific coast of the United States as on the Atlantic.

An analysis of the views of 1,000 scientists results in this list of the modern "seven wonders of the world": Wireless telegraphy, the telephone, the aeroplane, radium, antiseptics, spectrum analysis, and the X ray.

Such words as swearing and gambling show how the original meaning has become corrupted. Swearing is from swear, which comes from the Anglo-Saxon word meaning "honorable." Gambling comes from gaming, which comes from a Norse word signifying "old descent."

There are 3,767 canning establishments in the United States, employing 59,968 persons.

Last year, United States makers produced 14,659,700 kegs of wire nails of 100 pounds each.

Irrigation and a railroad for a large section of the Sahara Desert are planned by French colonial authorities.

Kansas City, Mo., school children this school year deposited \$50,300 in banks.

Diver in Death Fight With Huge Devil Fish.

Walter McRay, a diver, lives to tell the tale of a forty-five-minute fight with a devil fish eighty-five feet beneath the surface of the water at Seattle, Wash.

McRay every now and then telephoned the progress of the fight. When he finally gave the signal and was hoisted up the tentacles of the dead fish were around him. He had stabbed it eleven times before he was able to strike it in a vital place. The body measured nine feet in circumference.

Brief Sporting News.

Ty Cobb, of the Detroit Tigers, is playing the base-running game to the limit, as usual, winning close games on his speed. He is doing this under difficulties, as the Tigers are not giving him good support. Joe Jackson, of the Cleveland Naps, Cobb's rival for batting honors in the American League, is with a team that is fighting, and perhaps this explains why Jackson still leads Cobb in hitting. His mark is .393, while Cobb's percentage is .385.

The Great Bend ball team has won the 1913 pennant in the Kansas State League. This is the third straight time.

Gunboat Smith, the heavyweight pugilist, who recently put Jim Flynn out of the running, is paid the more-or-less doubtful compliment of being called "the best of the white hopes." That may get him something, at that, if Jack Johnson isn't allowed to come back to this country.

Frank Maisel, the Baltimore, Md., third baseman, for whom the New York American League team's management dug up \$12,000, has an older brother in the National League and five other brothers who are playing baseball.

In Bell and Snow, the Winona team of the Northern League has two great pitchers. Bell won twenty of his first twenty-six games, and Snow copped fourteen out of twenty.

The Detroit American League team has purchased Pitcher "Doc" Reynolds from the Topeka, Kan., team for

\$4,000, the highest price paid for a Western League player this season.

George Manhus, a member of the Atlantic City, N. J., Tri-state League team, created a sensation in his home town by refusing to stay in the hospital following an operation. He was taken back after a chase, and is said to be in a serious condition as a result of the exposure.

President McAleer, of the Boston Red Sox, has purchased Cooney, the crack shortstop of the Worcester, New England League, team.

The "Noisy Nine," a famous West Virginia baseball team of forty years ago, will hold its 1915 reunion at the Panama-Pacific Exposition, in San Francisco. All the players are living. In connection with the reunion the nine will challenge any team from anywhere that played forty years ago.

Seven double plays were made in a game between Providence and Baltimore, in the International League, recently.

Joe Tinker, manager of the Cincinnati National League ball team, is ready to quit, he says, unless Garry Hermann, owner of the club, quits selling his players. This is Tinker's first year as a manager, his fame resting on his record as a member of the Chicago National League team. The Cincinnati team has made a poor showing this year, and Tinker says the owner is largely to blame.

Monoplane Wins Race With Train.

Flying 287 miles in his monoplane, from Hempstead field, Long Island, to Gaithersburg, Md., in four hours and thirty-one minutes, Aviator C. Murvin Wood won a race with a train which had started at the same time that his flight began.

Wood flew so high that he became lost, and he was forced to land at Gaithersburg, sixteen miles from Washington, D. C. His destination was Fort, Myer, Va. He claims a new record, however. The best mark for a non-stop flight had been set by Lieutenant Thomas Milling, of the army aviation corps, who flew 270 miles.

Aged Man Rescues Baby from River.

While Jacob Fisher, 80 years old, was fishing in the Susquehanna River, near Sunbury, Pa., he heard a scream a short distance away, and found that his grandchild, Marie Fisher, 4 years old, had fallen into the stream. The aged man plunged in and rescued her.

Dies Seven Hundred Feet Under City.

Stupefying fumes of an explosion overcame sixteen men, killed one, and caused a panic among 400 others in the Catskill aqueduct, 700 feet under the streets of downtown New York. The sixteen affected were dragged unconscious to a shaft and brought to the surface in a lift.

Meaneat Thief Takes Food.

The world's record for the meaneat possible thievery goes to some one in Trenton, N. J., not as yet positively identified. He stole \$100 which was designed to buy an aged fireman a pair of cork legs.

Charles Schroeder, for many years a member of the local fire-fighting force, lost both of his legs a short time

ago when a horse stepped on one of his feet and the infection spread from the injured member to the other. Friends clubbed together to buy the helpless man some new legs.

This money reposed in a tin box in a secret nook in the Schroeder house.

High Tide Keeps Time on This Ball Field.

"Batter up! The tide's going out!"

That's what they yell in Ketchikan, Alaska, near the arctic circle, these fine days, as soon as they see the tide start to recede.

Shops close up, offices are forsaken, and even the eighteen saloons forget all about business while the proprietors chase down to see the great national game played. There is only one difficulty. They have to finish the game promptly, and cannot stop to quarrel with the umpire, for if they do the tide will come in on them and wash away players, backstop, bases, and all.

Ketchikan is a government wireless station. It is between the ocean and the mountains, and is built on piles because the tide rises and falls about twenty feet every day. It has 1,000 white inhabitants and 1,200 Indians, and among the whites is F. Ogden Norwood, an enthusiastic baseball fan, of East Orange, N. J. He has been a trader in Ketchikan for two years, and has just returned from a short stay with his parents. One day he noticed the tide running out and leaving a fine, wide, sandy beach.

Deciding that this would be a good ball field, he organized two nines, instructed them how to play, and now has made of the Indians and the whites such fans as real ball players never dreamed of. The backstop has to be anchored, the grand-stand seats are anchored down, and the bases are huge boulders dumped on the beach, but the game is a real game.

The tide usually take four hours, and sometimes only three, but some of this time is lost while the beach is packing down. Frequently fishing boats will get stranded with the receding tide, but the skippers do not care. They watch the ball game.

Three Inoculated, Dies.

Arthur C. Mills, of the Charleston Cadets, Company A, Fifth Regiment, M. V. M., who was supposed to be immune from typhoid fever through triple inoculation with anti-typhoid serum, died in the Somerville, Mass., Hospital from typhoid pneumonia recently.

Mills' case had been followed with more than usual interest, not only on account of his popularity, but also because of the elaborate precautions he had taken as an efficient soldier to make himself immune before going into camp at West Barnstable for the recent "war game" on the cape. He was inoculated three times to make sure of the serum taking effect. He was 30 years old, married, and in full health.

Shortly after he returned from camp he became ill.

Yamamoto Shuns Even Grape Juice.

Japan's prime minister, Count Yamamoto, drinks no strong drink, but he prefers his native tea to grape juice. Also, like Secretary of State Bryan, he does not smoke.

Count Yamamoto is an early riser. At five o'clock precisely every morning he is seen, in plain Japanese garb, taking a walk in the neighborhood of his residence in Tokyo. Upon his return he reads his papers with extraor-

dinary attention, from heavy editorials down to minor city events. With Countess Yamamoto, he has a plain breakfast, consisting of milk, eggs, and rice. After breakfast he begins to get ready for his day's work, while his wife prepares his tea.

Although an admiral, the premier wears a frock coat. Punctually at eight he leaves his home in an automobile, and in fifteen minutes he arrives at the cabinet offices, which are inside the palace compound. There he grimly goes through piles of state documents until at noon he takes his European luncheon, which invariably drives the severity from his countenance, and he is then ready for amiable conferences with his secretaries.

The premier shuns social engagements and late hours. At four p. m. he leaves his office and goes straight to his home. After a bath and a stroll in his garden, he takes a good Japanese dinner, for he is a healthy, stout old sailor with a real appetite. He wears a mustache and beard, now almost gray, but his most striking features are his eyes, bright and penetrating, testifying to the power and strength within. At the same time he has a kind heart. His domestic characteristics make him an amiable and sympathetic master.

Lion Trims His Toenails.

After all the fuss in the park circles about how the toenails of Nero, the African lion, at Washington Park, Portland, Ore., were to be trimmed, Nero has solved the problem by trimming them himself.

Park Superintendent Mische recently placed a large upright log of hardwood in the cage and hammered rocks into it with a sledge. Nero took advantage and catlike clawed at the log and rocks until he has worn a quarter inch off his nails.

If he can be persuaded to continue this operation the trimming of his nails by an expert will not be necessary.

Thinks We Can Live Forever.

Just exactly 400 years ago Ponce de Leon grew old and died searching for the fountain of eternal youth. To-day Harry Gaze, a young man in appearance at least, who has forgotten his birthday, claims he has found it, and expects to live forever. He lives in Berkeley, Cal.

Gaze never says die. "Old age is a curable disease," he says. "I have forgotten how old I am, and I never expect to die. I believe a thousand years of life will only whet my appetite for living."

"Every eleven months, according to science, we build an entirely new body. The secret of perpetual youth is the building of a better body each succeeding year. We don't grow old; we become old by not growing. There is no limit to a man's age except the one he fixes himself. Banish the idea of maturity. Make war on the 'prime of life.' Coöperate with nature. Don't defeat her. Cheer up, the best is yet to come."

Gaze himself is the picture of youth—muscular, alert, and vital. There seems to be nothing of the poser or freak about him.

While Gaze believes he has found the fount of youth in the human mind, he regards the physical as an important factor.

"Take brisk walks every morning. Take water and sun baths. Eat sparingly and only when hungry. Eat meat if you cannot enjoy other foods, but nuts and fruits are the best diet. Eat as much uncooked food as possible, for

heat breaks up the vital composition of food. Fruit contains elements that do not ossify the body. Eat at least one apple every day in the year. Chew thoroughly.

"The ripe olive is an excellent rejuvenative food, but the green olive has no food value. Olive oil is a solvent for lime deposits, and should be used internally and externally. Do not drink water with your meals, but drink about one-half gallon of distilled water a day. Do not drink coffee, tea, or alcoholic beverages.

"The mental attitude toward eating is more important, however, than the food. A feast of pork and pickles eaten in harmony is better than apples and figs in strife."

Feed Cows Foliage of Trees.

So dry have the pastures become around Pleasant Hill, Mo., that farmers are feeding their trees to their cows. In some instances farmers facing a shortage of feed have resorted to cutting limbs from oak trees and tossing them to their stock. So fond have the cattle become of this delicacy, according to one farmer, that they strain the fences in their anxiety for the next meal when they hear the ax and saw.

From Dire Poverty to Great Wealth.

Famished coyotes circled his little camp throughout the night, seeking to steal the trifle of bacon that was his sole remaining sustenance. His horse, weakened from lack of food and water, was too weak to resist the attack of the hungry brutes, and he was compelled to beat them off time and again.

No money, no friends to grubstake him, he was about to give up the struggle for fortune. Finally, just at dawn, when the sagebrush denizens had deserted him before the coming of the sun, he packed his scanty belongings and started west—started on the road that netted him a fortune of several hundred thousand dollars.

This the way "Jack" Yore—"Happy Jack" Yore, owner of half a dozen bonanzas in the Lone Mountain district of Nevada, and former associate of the famous foursome of miners, Fair, Flood, Mackay, and O'Brien, told the story recently of how he found the Rip van Winkle silver mine, sitting in an easy-chair in his de luxe apartment at the St. Francis, in San Francisco, Cal.

"I was hunting the Soldier's Dream, a mine supposed to have been discovered in sixty-three by Captain James Doughty," said Yore. "It was a gold prospect, and it ran twelve hundred ounces to the ton, so went the story that I picked up during my lonesome travels of years about the Nevada mountains.

"One slab of bacon, no flour, and no water was my outfit. I had been unfortunate, and my friends refused to stake me further. Down and out was my portion. Even my horse was a wreck of bones.

"One more trial," said I to myself and my plug, Skinny, 'and then, if I fail, I'll go railroading.'

"I lay down about eight o'clock of a beautiful April night. The stars came out, and they sure twinkled at me. I couldn't go to sleep; my stomach was too empty. Finally I tightened my belt and rolled over. Dozing I was when 'Yap, yay-it-yao' went those half-human brutes, the coyotes. They were fierce, and they came within ten feet of me. I shouted, and they retreated. That is, they did at first.

"All night I fought them, and they went away at break of day. I took my belongings—I had no cartridges for

my gun—and led Skinny. We hadn't gone two hundred yards until I found it—found the Rip van Winkle Mine, which I since sold for one hundred thousand dollars. There was the ore lying on top of the ground—virgin ore, and tons of it. I thought I had found the Soldier's Dream.

"I took the ore to the assayer. He said it assayed twenty-three hundred ounces to the ton. My financial struggles were over. After that I found half a dozen good mines, and they are paying me enough to-day to allow me ease the rest of my life—ease for myself and my niece, whom I shall send to a swell boarding school."

Yore practically owns Carlin and its surroundings, he admitted, besides some of the best mines in the Lone Mountain region.

This Girl Some Sprinter.

Miss Julia Downey defeated Miss Hattie Hutchinson, of Montreal, Canada, in their 100-yard match race at Ebets Field, Brooklyn, for the international girls' sprinting championship. Miss Downey is a native of Brooklyn, and is only 16 years old. She negotiated the "hundred" in the fast time of 13 seconds flat. Her admirers say that the little Yankee girl is the greatest little sprinter in the world, and are eager to have her meet the pick of foreign girl sprinters.

Rapid Dog Leaps into Woman's Car.

Dashing through the principal street of Charleston, W. Va., with a mad dog in her automobile, Mrs. A. M. Belcher kept her nerve and drove to a veterinary hospital, where the dog was dragged from the machine with a lasso. It had run amuck, had bitten a fruit vender and several dogs, and then jumped into Mrs. Belcher's automobile.

Grows Fuzzless Peaches.

W. E. Puett, a farmer and fruit grower, living eight miles from Cassville, Mo., brought in several baskets of fuzzless peaches.

The peaches are of the clingstone variety, and are exactly like an ordinary peach except that the skin is smooth, like that of an apple, and has deep-red color. Puett has three trees which produce these fuzzless peaches, and he says they were grown from the seed of the ordinary fuzzy-skinned Elberta.

Falling "Star" Misses Man by a Few Feet.

Hearing a whizzing noise as he was walking home late at night, W. L. Hubbell looked upward and saw what was apparently a star headed directly for him. In an instant the object had struck the earth, having missed him by only a few feet. Hubbell found a hole two feet deep where it struck, and, digging it out as soon as it became cool, he discovered it to be a meteorite, fifteen inches in circumference and weighing about eighteen pounds. It has the appearance of a round piece of slag.

A bed of rocks a few feet below the ground's surface had prevented the meteorite from burying itself deep.

Letter Delayed Forty-nine Years.

Forty-nine years after he enlisted in the Union army, M. Premo, a rancher, near Porterville, Cal., received his bounty money, \$100, from the government. Within the past few days a letter from the government officials found

its way to the home of Premo's son, G. W. Premo, in Bakersfield, by whom it was forwarded to Mr. Premo. Premo was a native of Canada when he enlisted in 1864, and the check originally sent to his Canadian address has been nearly half a century in reaching him.

Wins a Bride While Wearing Prison Suit.

John H. Graham won a bride while wearing prison stripes. He did not ask her to marry him until he was free, but it was only three days after his release until they were married.

Graham was sentenced from Putnam County, Tennessee, to serve three years for forgery. Last spring he was working with a gang of convicts outside the prison grounds and was sent to Westover Wells for a bucket of water. While getting the water, he saw Valley Taylor, the pretty daughter of William Taylor, proprietor of the wells. As a bridegroom, Graham admits that he saw Miss Valley several times before he was released, but he does not tell by what means.

When Graham was released, instead of going to Putnam County, he went to Westover Wells, and three days later claimed the daughter of the house as a bride, with full consent of the family.

Johnson Helps Sick Youth.

A baseball and an autograph letter from Walter Johnson, Washington's premier pitcher, did more than medicine could do to bring about the rapid convalescence of Warren A. Slee, a youthful Washington admirer of the big ball tosser. Johnson, whose numerous admirers include scores of boys, heard of the serious illness of Slee, and wrote him, sending a baseball he had used in pitching the Washington team to victory. The boy's recovery since receiving the letter has progressed rapidly.

Swims Lake While Asleep, He Says.

Frank Ryerson, an employee of an ice company at Racine, Wis., claims to have swum across the bay while asleep. He says he lay down on the lake bank and woke up near the opposite shore.

Chance Hopeful.

Frank Chance, of the New York American League team, the highest-priced manager in baseball, says he will have a real team next season. The one he has now is a joke.

Max Brenton, of Havelock, Iowa, who for two years held the 125-pound wrestling championship of the world, writes that he will be in condition for bouts in a few weeks, and will be pleased to hear from any 125-pound wrestlers who want matches.

Gives His Life to Save Two.

Hundreds of residents of Harbor Point, Mich., witnessed a tragedy in Little Traverse Bay, when Hal Souter, of Shelby, Mich., gave up his life to save his fiancée, Miss Teresa Miller, of Detroit, and his chum, Arthur Cook, of Gablesville, Mich. Souter sank, after giving up the rescued persons to Will Bailey, the Point life-saver, and was forgotten until his body was found near the shore.

Chased by a Whale.

To have their vessel lifted three feet out of the water, and to be later chased more than half a mile by an eighty-foot whale was the experience of Captain L. M. Smith

and the crew of the sea-going tug *Defiance*, which reached port from the Virginia capes. Any one who doubts the story can ask Captain Smith about it. The captain says the incident occurred while the tug was cruising between Cape Henry and Dalse Cape, off the Virginia seacoast.

"I was lying in my berth at the time, and Mate Jack Reese was at the wheel," said Captain Smith, "when all of a sudden the bow of the tug rose in the air and dropped with a plunge and a terrific roll. When I reached the deck Mate Reese was trying to steady the vessel, which was still rolling, and when he recovered his voice said that he had run over a whale.

"Standing in the pilot house we watched the whale, which turned around and followed the tug for at least half a mile, then headed toward the beach, as if fatally hurt. While the whale was following the tug it lifted almost two-thirds of its body out of the water. The fin, huge flukes, and almost the entire head were in plain view."

Fort's Shot Robs Captain of Pipe.

The *Gleaner*, a two-masted fishing smack, under the command of Captain Robert Tapper, brought a badly frightened crew to the dock. The captain acted a bit excited himself, and the boat looked as if it had gone through a South Sea typhoon. The block was broken off the main gaff, the downhaul had been cut in halves, in addition to other damage inflicted.

"No," said the captain, "we haven't been through a storm—we've been through a naval battle. And right off Sandy Hook, at that. About four o'clock in the afternoon we were making good time up the coast, with full sail and steam. We were just a mile off Sandy Hook. I suppose I was half asleep at the wheel, with my pipe in my mouth, when there was a shriek of a cannonball in the air. The right side of my face felt like it does when a barber is scraping it with a dull razor, and something took the pipe from my mouth.

"Before I had time to realize what had happened the whole boat trembled from a tremendous shock, and seemed to leap right out of the water. When I had told the crew, who were the most scared ten men you ever saw, that the boat was all right, I saw that the shell, which came from the fort at Sandy Hook, had grazed the end of the main gaff and had cut the downhaul in halves. And it had actually knocked the pipe from my mouth, for I found myself chewing the broken stem."

Cupid's Aid Will Wait for Lovers.

Milwaukee sweethearts like Wednesday night best; it is the most popular time of the week to take girls out walking. Consequently the county clerk has announced that the office will be open until eight o'clock Wednesday night, to issue marriage licenses. He says young man cannot take a day off to get licenses.

Forgotten Nine Years, Must Die.

Convicted of murder in the first degree, sentenced to die, and then forgotten for nine years is the unique experience of August Geber, who was recently sentenced at San Francisco to be hanged.

Geber was sent to San Quentin to await execution for the killing of George Hartman. On his appeal the conviction was upheld, but the records in the case were destroyed during the fire and earthquake of 1906, and Geber

kept quiet, knowing that any word from him would hasten his end. Relatives recently called the attention of the district attorney to the case.

Cemetery is Scene of Merry Picnic Parties.

Lawn parties in a cemetery constitute the very newest St. Louis, Mo., social thrill.

The young folks make merry in the subdued light of particolored Japanese lanterns, and, occasionally, seek diversion by strolls among the white and ghostly monuments.

So popular are these neighborhood fêtes that an invitation to spend an evening in Bellefontaine is rarely declined. The graveyard is especially favored for church society festivals, largely because of the hospitality of Mrs. Francis G. Burgess, wife of the assistant superintendent of interments.

One of these picnics was given by an intermediate Christian Endeavor Society the other night. Passers-by from other parts of the city were amazed at the spectacle of girls and boys and their chaperons enjoying themselves with music and games under the picnic lamps in the burying grounds.

After Twenty Years, Asks Lodging at Home.

James Huffman and his wife were sitting in their home on a farm near Glasgow, Ky., a few nights ago, talking about their son, Virgil, and wondering if he would ever come home. Virgil had been away twenty years, seeking his fortune in Alaska.

There was a knock at the door, and Huffman opened it, to see a dusty traveler, who said he was tired, and was seeking lodging for the night. Huffman thought he could do nothing for him, as there were visitors in the home, and the traveler turned to go.

But Mrs. Huffman could not see the man turned out into the night, so called him back. They led him into the hall, under the swinging lamp, and as the light fell on his face the aged couple recognized him. There was a glad reunion.

Virgil Huffman had been prospecting in Alaska for a number of years, and he had prospered. Now he will make his home with his parents.

Saved by His Long Hair.

John Caesar, a basketball player, owes his life to his long hair. He was bathing at Island Beach, Conn., when he slid out beyond his depth. He could not swim and shouted for aid. At first no one saw him. He was out of sight when John Carmichael ran into the water to save him.

Caleb Mead pointed out the spot where the man was last seen, and Carmichael dropped off his trousers and shoes and dived in. He swam under the water until he located Caesar, and grabbed him by his hair and brought him to the surface.

Aged "Land Looker" Lives Like Hermit.

To have "looked" more land than any other "land looker" in the United States and to have carried on his profession in every lumbering State in the United States is the remarkable record of George Doxide, one of northern Michigan's earliest and best-known pioneers.

Since the earliest days of the lumbering industry in Michigan, Doxide has been actively concerned, and even to-day, though well past seventy years, he still makes long

trips through the wilds of the Northwestern States and estimates the timber.

Lumber estimating is largely a matter of experience, and there is not a concern in the country which does not know of Doxide's ability, and there are but few of the larger companies which have not employed him. Some of the largest pieces of timber which this remarkable man has estimated include 100,000 acres in southern Florida, 45,000 acres in Wisconsin, and 31,500 acres in New Mexico.

Doxide's reputation as Cadillac's and northern Michigan's most unique character does not rest entirely in his phenomenal record of a land looker, however, but more especially in his manner of living and in the numberless relics which he has secured during his sixty years of traveling.

This famous land looker is more like the hermits of fiction than a matter-of-fact business man of the twentieth century. Although recognized as one of Cadillac's best-known and most remarkable citizens, Doxide has never lived in the city. When he first came to this region, long before there were any houses on the ground where Cadillac now stands, Doxide built a home on the farther shore of Lake Mitchell, the largest of the two lakes which touch the city but one block from the main street. Here he has always lived, and, although he has kept a room reserved in the city's best hotel during all these years, yet he has spent but very little time in the city, preferring to live by himself.

The land looker's duties consist of determining the amount of and quality of the timber upon the land, the facilities for loggings, and the "shape" of the surface. He strikes out into the unbroken forest and frequently "picks it" for days, apparently following no given direction.

Cried "Wolf" Too Often.

Ray Munker, sixteen years old, went swimming in Winwood Lake, Kansas City, Mo., with several other boys. They had been in the water only a short time when Munker suddenly began struggling, and shouted, "Help!" Then he sank.

His companions swam to the place where he had gone down and dived and splashed and lashed the water into foam in a frantic effort to find him. Then they saw him come up a few feet away and swim away easily, laughing.

It was great sport. Again and again he tried it, until finally his cries for help went unheeded. When he shouted the last time the boys scarcely looked at the place where he had sunk from sight. And when they did miss him they had forgotten the spot where they last saw him. Thirty minutes later they found his body at the bottom of the lake. Efforts to restore life to the boy were futile.

Pinched Feet His Undoing.

Because he had pinched his feet into shoes several sizes too small, thus contracting "hammer toes," Frank Eversley, a well-built young man, was turned away from a United States naval recruiting station. He was the nearest perfect specimen of physical manhood who has ever applied at the recruiting station, but his ambition for a dainty foot has ruined his chances for naval service.

Vacations For Fire Horses.

Horses in the fire department, at Portland, Ore., are getting a vacation this year, the same as all city employees. Arrangements were made recently for the rental of a

pasture near Oswego, in which the horses, many of which have been on duty continuously for years, can take a rest. Four of the big animals from headquarters station were taken to the resting ground recently.

After they have had a rest of about three weeks they will be placed back in service and others turned loose in the pasture.

Suspect Missing Child Was Slain.

Search for Catherine Winters, the nine-year-old daughter of Doctor W. A. Winters, of Newcastle, Ind., who disappeared from her home last March, revealed startling developments recently, and the grand jury will be given clues which point to the murder of the child.

Doctor Winters and his wife, the child's stepmother, were questioned for three hours by Prosecuting Attorney H. H. Evans, Deputy Prosecutor Charles De Witt, and Chief of Police James Bouslog, after several neighbors had requested that the parents of the child be examined on the theory that they had not made clear all the circumstances surrounding the mysterious disappearance.

"I have been made to understand that Doctor Winters is acquainted with the location of the child," was the only statement which Prosecutor Evans would make after Doctor Winters and his wife had been permitted to leave his office. "The grand jury will be given the facts, and asked to follow them to a conclusion."

"Continued search for the child, a quest which has spread over the entire country, has left us in the belief that she was not kidnaped," said Chief Bouslog. "Every clew which might have led to her discovery, had she been abducted, has been exhausted, and the theory of murder affords a reasonable explanation of the case. Proof is another matter."

The calling of Doctor Winters and his wife was without warning, but the father admitted afterward that he had both feared and expected such a development. In answer to the questions, Doctor Winters repeatedly declared that had he had anything to do with his daughter's disappearance he would have fled Newcastle. He told of his earnest search and the following of every clew.

Big-league Clubs Buying Youngsters.

Managers of clubs in the National and American Leagues are now buying ball players from the smaller leagues, and there is lots of talk about \$10,000 and \$12,000 purchases. The prices are usually far less than the figures that are given to the public. Owners of clubs in the minor leagues stretch values in order to make a good showing. In many of the deals there is simply an agreement that the big-league managers will give the men a trial and will pay a good price for them if they make good, and will send them back if they fail. By the opening of next season, when the books are closed, it will be found that the major-league clubs have averaged only about \$15,000 in purchases. For the big leagues have their scouts running around among the smaller leagues and purchase for little money and later have the first draft of these players. The result is that they put a major-league label on the young and untried players as well as a price that the minors pay when they get the players back in the spring after a failure in fast company.

The major leagues naturally have the first call on the young college players. These players cost the big leagues nothing, but once they have signed them up a good price

is put on each man's head as he is later sent back to organized ball, and the league club becomes a financial winner.

Manager Mack, of the Philadelphia Athletics, picks up from twenty-five to thirty young players every year, and they do not cost him a cent. Many of them have just graduated from high school, and are sent to the smaller leagues all over the country. In baseball a player can sign a contract with a National League club for the salary of \$3,000, we will say, and the first season out will find him playing in a small league for \$600, and the major league will still have control of the player, sometimes holding him for four or five years before becoming satisfied that he is worthy of a real trial or an outright release.

The small army of major-league scouts, at least fifty in number, experts in their line of work, have scoured the country thoroughly this year to find but few promising players. In picking the younger players for the big-league clubs scouts select boys of good habits that give promise, with the idea of sending these boys to other minor-league clubs of high class before going to the spring training camps. Four-fifths of these young players will not be ripe for major-league work inside of three years, and the percentage of those who will make good will be one out of ten, while those who have a chance of becoming stars drift into the limelight on an average of about five a year.

There are sixteen clubs all hustling for this material, all have the same chance to get the men, and while there is a large amount of luck in picking up good ball players, in the long run it is a clear case of good management. If it was not, how would Connie Mack and Johnnie McGraw always have first-class ball clubs?

Thumb-mark Signature.

Nobody can forge Tommy's signature.

Tommy is a Creek Indian, and that's all his name. Just Tommy. His home is in the old Seminole Nation district of Oklahoma.

Some time ago Tommy gave a deed for part of his allotment, which includes oil lands. Now he has brought suit to have the deed set aside. The papers arrived here for service, and they were signed merely with Tommy's right-thumb print, done in creosote. He dips the thumb in the dark fluid and stamps it on the paper. Some one who knows how to write adds these words:

"Tommy, Roll No. 1543. His Thumb Mark."

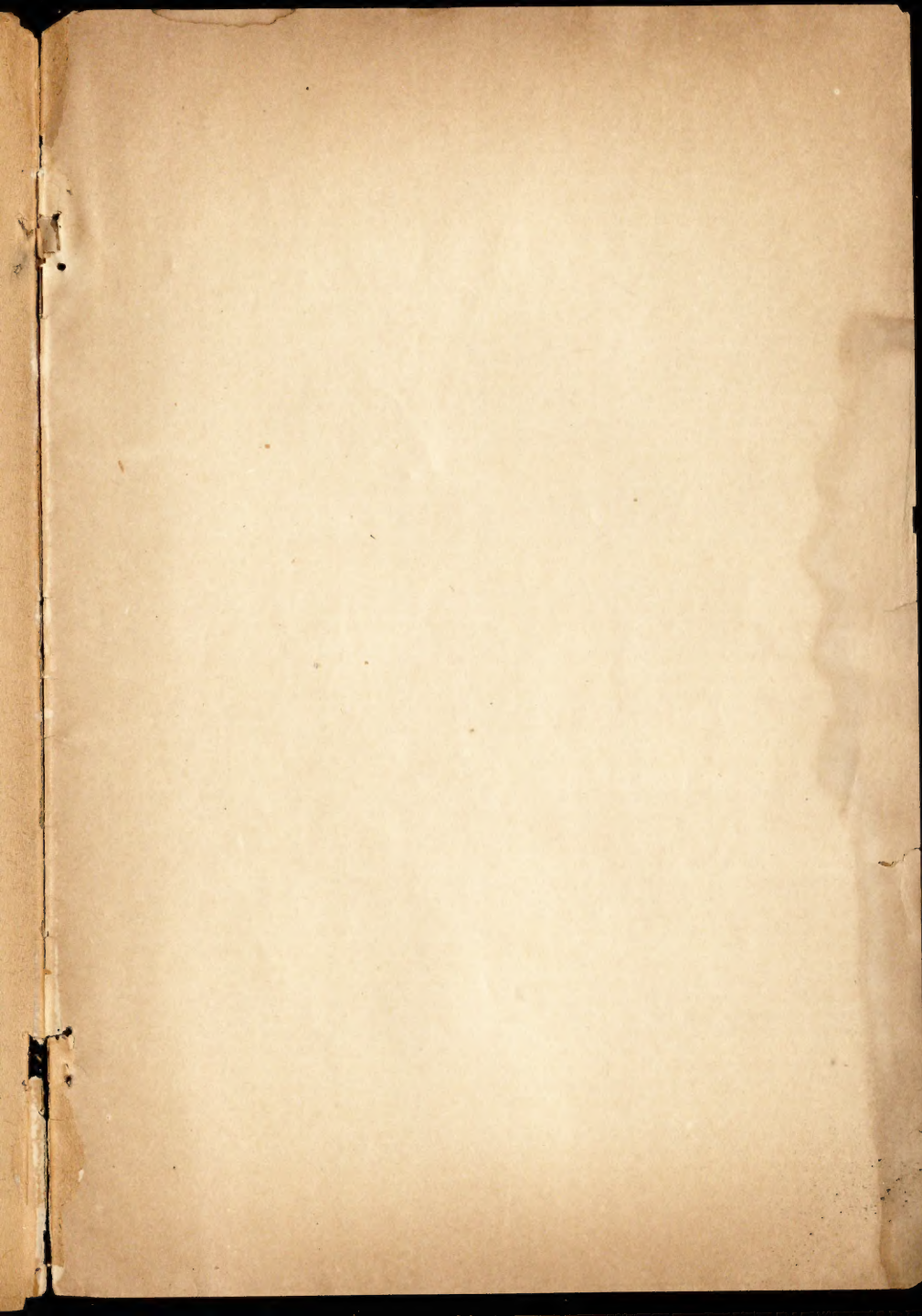
And, of course, there's not another thumb mark in the world like his. Ask Puddinhead Wilson.

Dog Saves Boy and Girl.

A dog gave its life recently to save a boy and a girl, children of William Wageman, a farmer living near Red Lake Falls, Minn.

A leopard, which had been at large since escaping from a circus at Crookston, attacked the children. Their dog was near by, and it charged the animal, diverting its attention while the little folk ran into the house. After it had killed the dog, the leopard escaped into a cornfield.

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